RELIGIOUS WOMEN IN MODERN AMERICAN SOCIAL REFORM: 
EVANGELINE BOOTH, AIMEE SEMPLE MCPHERSON, DOROTHY DAY, 
AND THE RHETORICAL INVENTION OF HUMANITARIAN AUTHORITY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the contributions of three prominent women religious leaders to 1920s and 30s public debates over how to best address extreme human needs. To enter the debates, these women had not only to offer compelling visions of religiously inspired social service, but to distance themselves from the older Victorian cultural ideals of “charity” that were being dramatically challenged by the development of “scientific” standards and state-based authority in humanitarian endeavors. This study compares and contrasts the rhetorical efforts of Evangeline Booth (the American Commander of the Salvation Army), Aimee Semple McPherson (founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel), and Dorothy Day (co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement). I argue that each leader variously invoked her femininity and her religion in ways which spoke to the humanitarian crises of her age and simultaneously appropriated and challenged the “modern” social welfare agenda before her.

This study begins by examining how late-nineteenth-century religious women leaders were empowered by a model of female moral authority based in Victorian ideals of female purity and piety, before showing how that ideological basis was challenged by the early-twentieth-century rise of scientific and state-based philosophies meant to address humanitarian crises more effectively. It then traces the ways Booth, McPherson, and Day presented alternate inspired visions of humanitarian care, while reframing the role of both women and religion in the new “modern” humanitarian sphere. The rise of scientific, state-based approaches to meeting extreme
human needs was not simply a challenge to older Victorian notions of religiously based female moral authority; rather it was an agent of the transformation of both “religion” and the moral ethos of women in the humanitarian sphere.
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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

The twenty-year period between World War I and World War II was marked by social and political upheaval. Economic depression, insecure global peace, uncontrolled industrialization, and urban poverty each contributed to an era that, within the United States at least, set the stage for the multiplication of debates among political and social actors advocating for new public policies and social systems to improve the conditions of society’s most vulnerable and marginalized members. This “humanitarian sphere” generated an array of plans, visions, and rhetorics: some were scientific and experimental, some were radical and religious, some built on humanitarian traditions of the past, and others broke sharply with it. These plans, visions, and rhetorics contributed to what Thomas Benson calls a “crowded” 1920s and 30s public culture replete with “voices and images interpreting the crises and attempting to shape policies and attitudes.” Still, all of them shared a modern notion that a well-functioning society necessarily included efforts to actively and collectively correct the conditions of human suffering.

As Charles Taylor suggests in *A Secular Age*, Enlightenment modernity precipitated the intellectual development of such practical approaches designed to address the problem of persistent human suffering and need. Western modernity, Taylor argues, helped intellectuals and public leaders imagine humanisms which, on the one hand, endowed individuals with worth and, on the other, empowered collectives to preserve and protect that worth through efforts to
transform the conditions of human need. Modern humanisms, in this sense, provided the ethical basis for innovations which took “an activist, interventionist stance, both towards nature and to human society,” a stance which imagined social goods as best pursued when social actors used instrumental rationality to guide their efforts. As Taylor writes, one of the implications of this trend was the characterization of benevolence as a necessary and inherent drive underlying modern “moral psychology.” Benevolence came to be understood as stemming from either “enlightenment and discipline” or “an original propensity to sympathy.” Either way, benevolence prompted the creation of modern humanitarianisms that were, at their core, motivated and empowered by the conviction that collective human efforts could overcome any and all social ills. “Social reform” constituted a particularly powerful approach and was characterized by its application of scientific methodologies and instrumental rationality to the causes (rather than merely the symptoms) of suffering and human need.

Indeed, in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-centuries, political and social actors were inspired to develop within the American humanitarian sphere new “scientific” methods and applications for relief of human suffering. Methods such as observation, induction, and the testing of hypotheses through experimentation under variable conditions provided humanitarian advocates not only with new means for responding to human suffering and need, but new ways of constructing moral authority in society. As humanitarian proponents debated how scientism might be deployed in order to advance care for the suffering they also developed professionalized approaches designed to steer permanent and systemic social change. Scientific, professionalized forms of social reform were applied in a variety of “humanitarian” contexts, from hospitals to corrections facilities, schools to government welfare agencies. Reformers of all sorts—public and private, religious and secular—advanced scientific approaches to social reform
as part of what Jane Addams termed the era’s new “humanitarian movement.” As the early-twentieth-century progressed, volunteer and professional reformers alike increasingly understood scientifically based benevolence strategies as best implemented by government organizations. Thus the value for professionalized and systematized social reform forwarded not only scientism within the humanitarian sphere but statism, the notion that state authority provided a superior strategic basis for staging modern social reform endeavors, as well.

Even so, religious women made up one group of humanitarian advocates for whom the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century shift in favor of modern social reform strategies based in scientism and statism caused a crisis. As Peggy Pascoe argues, the increasing importance during this period of “scientific attitudes” within the humanitarian sphere precipitated the decline of female moral authority as an ideology which had previously proved vital to religious women’s participation in American social reform. In the late-nineteenth-century, religious women played a significant part in developing American humanitarianisms. According to Pascoe, Protestant women reformers from this era justified their social influence efforts by embracing the premise that female moral authority stemmed from Victorian ideals of feminine sexual purity and Protestant religious piety. However, as modern social reform strategies advanced in the 1920s and 30s, female moral authority faced significant challenges from competing humanitarian models. For instance, as Robert Bremner writes, the postwar 1920s gave rise to professionally-run, city-based “community chests” which were typically overseen by men and pooled donor resources in order to encourage the “rational distribution” of aid to the needy. Additionally, as Stanley Carlson-Thies notes, the early-twentieth-century saw a significant shift away from the distribution of benevolence through private, local, religious charities toward “a government-centered system of help,” a shift with further marginalized some
religious women reformers.\textsuperscript{10} To boot, as Linda Gordon notes, in the 1920s and 30s, many women reformers choose to deemphasize or actively delegitimize female moral authority in their efforts to develop social work as a profession. As social workers, women derived their reform authority not from Victorian, religiously based moralism but from the specialized, scientific training they received in the practice of case work.\textsuperscript{11}

These challenges to female moral authority disrupted the basic premises undergirding women’s participation in the humanitarian sphere, causing them appear outmoded and problematic. In the early-twentieth-century, women leaders, such as Jane Addams, responded to such changes by inventing new arguments to support their participation in the humanitarian sphere. Addams, for instance, explicitly articulated her settlement houses as outlets for humanitarian advocates to pursue “Christian reform” that was emotionally and personally motivated but that also, as Jean Bethke Elshtain writes, extended “the boundaries of home to include the city.”\textsuperscript{12} For her, “housekeeping” of the sort which entailed “dealing with the wider forces that intrude into every domicile, for good or ill” was a way for women reformers to express “civic commitment,” or devotion to duties which encompassed more responsibilities than those owed to private home life.\textsuperscript{13} Additionally, Addams consistently couched the settlement house movement as fully embracing modern methods designed to “make assistance more professional.”\textsuperscript{14} In Hull-House, she blended domesticity and modern sensibilities, offering immigrants “art, drama, and music as well as public baths, baby care, job training, and classes in English and in citizenship.”\textsuperscript{15} In this sense, Addams was an example of a woman leader who invented new arguments, such as the potential for women to promote “civic commitment” and “citizenship,” in order to posit women’s moral influence in the humanitarian sphere as still
relevant in the twentieth century despite the increasingly troubled bases for female moral authority articulated by women reformers of the previous era.

Addams marked a trend among women leaders who in the early-twentieth-century struggled to invent out of the new discourses of scientism and statism new arguments advocating women’s influence in the humanitarian sphere. This dissertation will examine that trend, showing how, in the midst of the economic and social crises of the 1920s and 30s, three prominent women leaders leading out of explicitly religious organizations engaged in constructive, rhetorically powerful, yet distinctive efforts to articulate women’s influence as vital to the development of modern social reform. Evangeline Booth, the American Commander of the Salvation Army from 1904 to 1934, Aimee Semple McPherson, founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, and Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, each invented new terminologies and modes of leadership which transformed the bases underlying their authority in the humanitarian sphere. Their arguments responded to the crisis in female moral authority by connecting women’s religious authority to the advance of modern social reform. Each thus sought to discover new means for establishing religious women as authoritative leaders in the 1920s and 30s American humanitarian sphere; each did so in a way which reflected her organization’s particular religious values. In this way, each of these women leaders re-envisioned religious women’s social influence in their attempts to apply religious values to developing standards of professionalization in modern social reform and to the emerging U.S. welfare state. Booth’s, McPherson’s, and Day’s humanitarian rhetorics upheld the value of religious women’s reform efforts, even as they engaged modern social reform discourses and promoted new strategies for pursuing social change. In this sense, these women religious leaders responded to the deprivation, dispossession, and destitution endemic to
American in the 1920s and 30s but also demonstrated women religious leaders as helping construct America’s modern social fabric in the early-twentieth-century.

The first section of this introductory chapter begins to build this argument by examining how women proved vital to the development of the American humanitarian sphere in the late-nineteenth-century. I show how religious women in particular contributed to the rise of a model of female moral authority based in Victorian ideals of feminine purity and piety. In the second section, I go on to trace how in the early-twentieth-century the application of scientism and statism to the humanitarian sphere strongly challenged such female moral authority, and in doing so made problematic the authoritative bases of religious women’s social reform efforts. In the third section, I indicate how early-twentieth-century women leaders, such as Jane Addams, responded to the crisis of Victorian ideals and female moral authority by reframing the arguments justifying women’s humanitarian influence, thus inventing new modes of leadership which linked moral reform to aspects of modern social reform. I introduce Evangeline Booth, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Dorothy Day as exemplary cases of how this early-twentieth-century trend extended to women leading explicitly religious reform efforts within the humanitarian sphere. I conclude with a discussion of the methodology and particular research methods I pursue in building the argument that these women leaders constructed particularly powerful contributions to public debates surrounding religious women’s participation in modern social reform. I argue that this analysis adds a needed focus to rhetorical studies, given its attention to how religious rhetorics in particular shaped the 1920s and 30s development of the American humanitarian sphere. Comparative study of Booth’s, McPherson’s, and Day’s humanitarian rhetorics promises to expand rhetorical scholarship’s understanding of the significant role religious rhetorics play in shaping historical patterns of social change in America.
Religious Women in the Late-Nineteenth-Century Humanitarian Sphere: Victorian Ideals and the Model of Female Moral Authority

As the historiography of American humanitarianism indicates, women proved vital to the ongoing development of the late-nineteenth-century humanitarian sphere. For instance, as Seth Koven and Sonya Michel suggest, women reformers from this period engaged in significant public advocacy efforts on behalf of humanitarian causes on the basis that they possessed “special insights into issues of social justice and social welfare,” these insights “rooted in their differences from men.”16 From 1880 through 1920, Koven and Michel argue, multiple advocacy and lobbying networks created by American women reformers significantly influenced the nation’s humanitarian institutions and programs, especially state-based efforts designed to define and address women’s and children’s needs.17 Middle-class women in particular, the authors note, “had the education and financial resources to campaign for social welfare programs and policies.”18 As Katherine Kish Sklar adds, middle-class women reformers in the late-nineteenth-century pursued widespread, multi-faceted social reform efforts which, for the most part, derived their authoritative basis from predominant social perceptions that women were less “tainted” than men due to their general exclusion from public activities that might expose them to vice, such as electoral politics and wage earning.19 According to Sklar, white, middle-class women reformers, who were set apart from many traditionally male-dominated aspects of civic life, articulated the moral authority which drove their reform efforts as stemming from “a vision of women as the embodiment of virtue within civil society.”20 Out of the moral authority they gained from perceptions of their inherent virtue, women attempted to influence society through their advocacy on behalf of humanitarian relief.
Even so, as Koven and Michel and Sklar indicate, late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century women’s reform efforts were largely derived from domestic ideologies which emphasized women’s prescribed role as mothers, and, with that role, the need for women, even in their capacity as social reformers, to conform to Victorian standards of purity, piety, and domesticity. As Koven and Michel put it, “maternalism” remained vital to white, middle-class women’s advocacy on behalf of women and children’s political and economic rights. Maternalism constituted a domestic ideology which particularly emphasized women’s differences from men, women’s innate concern for the care of children, and women’s resonance with the aims of the Christian gospel. In this sense, women reformers from this period who based their participation in the humanitarian sphere on maternalism, specifically by upholding their supposedly inherent “mothering” abilities, labored under the requirement that their reform efforts remain tied to the outworkings of feminine virtue, namely self-sacrifice and submission.

According to Peggy Pascoe, some religious women reformers searched for a model female moral authority that could provide further basis for their advocacy efforts. As her study of late-nineteenth-century Protestant “home mission women” indicates, religious women reformers embraced female moral authority as a domestic ideology that derived from maternalism but additionally used the concept of the “Christian home” as a launching point for broad social critiques. As Pascoe notes, the ideal model of the Christian home underlying female moral authority as a domestic ideology explicitly embraced Victorian middle-class values, such as romantic marriage, motherhood, sexual purity and restraint, the role of men as economic providers, and the complementary role of women as “moral guardians.” In this sense, home missions women articulated their social reform efforts as empowered by Victorian notions of feminine purity and piety. As Pascoe writes, these reformers’ efforts to reach “women outside of
Victorian middle-class culture” were premised on the belief that, “since [men’s] unrestrained sexuality threatened women’s moral purity, women had a special ‘mission’ to sustain Protestant moral values by ‘rescuing’ female victims and teaching them to emulate the family and gender roles of white, middle-class Victorian culture” (6). In this sense, the religious women featured in Pascoe’s study approached social reform as a dual extension of feminine virtue and religiosity. Their advocacy for social change (whether on behalf of women or in critique of male immorality) found its authoritative expression through a combination of mothering abilities, sexual purity, and Protestant piety.

Still, as Pascoe and Sklar each suggest, domestic ideologies in all of their particular manifestations, while aimed at expanding women’s influence and improving the condition of society’s most vulnerable members, also reinforced social hierarchies based in race and class distinctions. Sklar notes that late-nineteenth-century middle-class women reformers, although building coalitions between middle-class and working-class women, wielded their moral authority in a way that failed to fully transcend race and class divisions. Women’s coalitions helped white women gain access to state resources, but they were unable to win similar gains for black women. Further, elite, educated middle-class women reformers possessed political and financial resources that put them in a position of leadership in relation to the working-class women with whom they sought partnerships.23 Pascoe argues that, in the case of Protestant home mission women, the reformers’ “sincere concern” for the “immoral women” they sought to help was significantly “shaped by confidence in their own advantages” as white women securely ensconced in Victorian middle-class culture.24 Thus, even though they remained committed to “woman’s work for woman,” home mission women also acted out of a “determination to retain a line between moral and immoral women,” or Christian women within the Victorian middle-class
and non-Christian women without. Additionally, Ian Tyrrell suggests that some women’s evangelical Protestant organizations, such as the World’s Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WWCTU), a transnational organization created by Frances Willard in the early-twentieth-century, articulated equality among women as a goal even as they “created constituencies of givers and receivers” which divided women based on race and social class. The WWCTU, he claims, attempted to use the notion of shared Christian sisterhood in order to spread temperance reform in international contexts but, in doing so, cast its Western branches as “maternal” rather than sisterly with regard to its international partners. According to Tyrrell, in the WWCTU, evangelical mission, and with it female moral authority, became closely associated not only with the advance of women’s causes but also with promulgation of American moral superiority.

Religious women thus deeply shaped the culture and development of the late-nineteenth-century humanitarian sphere, even as their invocation of a model of female moral authority based in Victorian cultural values reinforced rather than mitigated inequalities. Female moral authority in this sense became a means for religious women to expand their social reform endeavors, although it remained an ideology reliant on resilient class, race, and gender stratifications. At the turn of the century, however, the grounding for women’s participation in humanitarian work shifted. With the advent of modern social reform as a “science” and the state as a primary channel for the advance of humanitarian projects, women reformers willingly sought to reconstruct the authoritative bases for their work within the humanitarian sphere. As many scholars note, domestic ideologies continued to influence early-twentieth-century American social reform, even with the rise of scientism, social work, and the welfare state. Nevertheless, the development of modern social reform strategies which strongly challenged older Victorian models marked a period of crisis during which women leaders—especially religious ones—
needed to renegotiate the authoritative bases for their participation in the humanitarian sphere.
In the next section, I examine the challenges faced by religious women as modern social reform
began to rise within the humanitarian sphere, but also the ways in which religious women set the
stage for the invention of new arguments justifying religious women’s participation in the early-
twentieth-century American humanitarian sphere.

The Crisis of Female Moral Authority in the Early-Twentieth-Century Humanitarian Sphere

The turn of the century brought with it a significant shift toward scientism and statism in
the American humanitarian sphere. Robert Gross characterizes this turn as part of a pattern
wherein the professionalization and systematization of social reform, what he calls the “tradition
of philanthropy,” began to overshadow traditional practices of charitable giving. According to
Gross, “charity” as a traditional practice emphasized the “impulse to personal service; it engages
individuals in concrete, direct acts of compassion and connection to other people.”
As practiced in America, the tradition of charity had its roots in “the reformed Protestantism of
English settlers” and was “later reinforced by the heritage of Catholicism and Judaism brought
by immigrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.” The tradition of philanthropy, on the
other hand, was inherently tied to Enlightenment modernity, scientific methods, and instrumental
rationality. Philanthropy aimed to “apply reason to the solution of social ills and needs” and
“reform society” rather than merely “aid individuals.” As such, its aim was to promote
“progress through the advance of knowledge,” with the hope that knowledge as to the causes of
poverty and other social ills would lead to “a world where charity is uncommon—and perhaps
unnecessary.”

As Bremner writes, in the late-nineteenth-century, “scientific philanthropy” developed as a preferred alternative to charitable “almsgiving.” Early advocates of scientific philanthropy sought to use scientific methods to ensure that charitable resources were directed toward those with “legitimate need” who could become self-supporting rather than toward those whose ongoing indigence constituted a “pernicious social disease.” As Judith Sealander adds, scientific philanthropy influenced several “self-made men” to create and fund organizations designed to study society, understand “the dangers posed by the industrial revolution,” and publicly express worry about such dangers. According to Ruth Crocker, however, not all wealthy practitioners of scientific philanthropy were men. Olivia Sage, a woman with a vast amount of wealth inherited from her industrial tycoon husband, for example, used her inherited fortune to establish the Russell Sage Foundation, an institution which, in the early-twentieth-century, became the primary American base for “the study of social problems” and “the dissemination of knowledge” intended to discover and eradicate causes of poverty. Still, philanthropy did not remain the sole concern of private groups and individuals. In fact, as philanthropy began to gain ascendancy at the turn-of-the-century, social reformers, both volunteer and professional, began to view government organization of benevolence distribution as preferable to “the localism, moralism, and discretionary nature of sectarian and private welfare.” In this sense, the shift in favor of professionalized, systematized social reform led not only to the embrace of scientism by benevolence institutions but also to reformers’ shared conviction that statism constituted the best means for enacting scientific social reform strategies.

The early-twentieth-century saw a continuation of the turn toward scientism and statism within the American humanitarian sphere. Even so, as change proceeded, women reformers found ways to adapt to modern developments. For instance, as Kenneth Kusmer indicates,
prominent benevolence institutions, like the Charity Organization Societies, implemented scientific philanthropy in part by mobilizing fleets of “friendly visitors,” mostly upper or middle-class white women volunteers, who were sent into “every corner of the city” to investigate and accurately record the needs and living conditions of families and individuals who required assistance.37 By the end of the nineteenth century, the scientific investigations of friendly visitors were beginning to influence accepted theories of poverty, namely the view that personal culpability and weakness were the causes of certain individuals’ persistent economic and social disadvantages. Through scientific philanthropy, many reformers uncovered abundant evidence of what Bremner calls “a host of poverty-producing factors” which perpetuated economic insecurity and insufficiency.38 According to Bremner, the scientific insights of late-nineteenth-century “social workers” (as they were beginning to be called) were later translated into a “new view of poverty” which became prominent in the early-twentieth-century and which led humanitarian advocates to pursue “social” and “industrial” reform of “unjust and degrading conditions of work and living” rather than the “moral” and “individual” reform of the recipients of charitable giving.39

In the early-twentieth-century, many women reformers embraced this “new view” of poverty and used the tools of modern scientism to substantiate calls for state and federal legislation designed to efficiently eliminate the forces underlying conditions of human suffering and need. Women joined causes which promoted social legislation encompassing a breadth of causes and remedies:

“fair standards of wages, hours, and housing; prohibition of child labor and regulation of dangerous trades; compensation of labor for unemployment, accidents, sickness, and old age; organization of more vigorous and more effective
public-health programs; institution of more abundant recreational facilities and a more practical system of public education; and restriction of immigration.”

Arguably, the most strenuous advocates among women reformers (or all reformers) for the application of scientism through social legislation were social workers, predominantly female volunteer and professional agents of institutions public and private, large and small whose adoption of “casework” as an investigative technique was directly derived from scientific philanthropy’s emphasis on scientific method. According to Gordon, late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century casework techniques “required in-depth investigation of a client’s background, circumstances, and attitudes.” For social workers, casework provided the means for discovering the particular “environmental” factors and “individual circumstances” which caused “pauperism,” or the condition of persistent poverty. As Gordon argues, with the rapid expansion of welfare state bureaucracy in the 1920s, women activists working as social workers became even more committed to enacting social reform legislation through all levels of government. Gordon adds that as early-twentieth-century social workers became increasingly invested in the developing welfare state, they became more aware of their need for “authoritative expertise.” That awareness translated into the creation of professional standards to guide social workers’ reform activities, whether pursued in public administration, such as in the U.S. Children’s and Women’s Bureaus, or newly formed local and state government welfare agencies, or privately based benevolence institutions.

Still, as Gross notes, women social workers were not alone in their embrace of scientism and statism as core aspects of modern social reform. Some evangelical Christian groups initially resisted the trend toward professionalized philanthropy and instead headed “into the slums in hopes of saving souls.” However, many of these religiously-inspired volunteers emerged from
their witness of the “miserable” and “exploitive” conditions of the poor as “social reformers” intent on pressing their agendas on behalf of the needy in the “political arena” and in the press.48 Thus, even evangelical Protestant service institutions, such as the American Salvation Army, which dispatched young, female “Slum Lasses” to urban neighborhoods in the early-twentieth-century in order to spread purity and piety, eventually attested to the advantages of scientifically inspired approaches to modern social reform.49 As Lillian Taiz adds, in the 1920s and 30s, the ASA had even begun to view its “social and emergency rescue work” as directly participating in America’s emerging “semi-welfare state.”50

Despite enthusiasm for the advance of scientism and statism in the early-twentieth-century, many religious women continued to struggle with the shifting moorings underlying their participation in the humanitarian sphere—including the diminishment of moral authority that had been accrued to white women in Victorian culture. Indeed the premises of that authority faced daunting challenges from several fronts, including from cultural changes to the “Victorian gender system” and from “the decline in the cultural authority of Protestant evangelicalism.”51 The emergence of a “new gender system” among white middle-class women and the “new woman” as an early-twentieth-century model which idealized “female passion” made the notion of feminine purity “obsolete” and “pushed pious Protestant women further from the mainstream of American society.”52 Furthermore, feminine piety “lost its salience” as Protestant religiosity began to lose prominence as a source of suasive moral appeal.53 Additionally, the “scientific attitudes” of the developing social work bureaucracy weakened the “ideological groundwork” upon which many religious women based their reform efforts.54 Thus, mounting challenges to female moral authority threw the terms which once empowered religious women’s reform efforts into question. Rhetorical arguments articulated in the previous era suggesting such things as
feminine purity and piety as useful and needful sources for social change were exposed as problematic as ideals of Victorian womanhood were challenged.

New debates with regard to the part religious women leaders would play in advancing modern social reform thus developed. For example, according to Regina Kunzel, in the early-twentieth-century development of the Florence Crittenton Homes for single mothers, tensions arose which pitted evangelical Protestant volunteers’ “glorification of motherhood and idealization of sisterhood” against the desire of professional social workers to “defeminize the work.” The social work establishment, which began to oversee the Crittenton Homes in the 1920s after a shift in organizational funding from private to public sources, challenged evangelical volunteers’ “sentimental and perhaps even morbid motives” and cautioned that care for women needed to consider “facts, not fictitious heart throbs.” As Kunzel implies, women social workers attempted to create a gender-neutral “rhetoric of benevolence” within the Crittendon Homes. Professional social workers did so in party by denigrating evangelical women’s feminine sentimentality. Thus, the scientific bases of social work sought to displace the once persuasive claims of female moral authority. As Kunzel and Pascoe each note, early-twentieth-century religious women frequently attempted to adjust to the tension-fraught situations they encountered by cooperating with state agents and professional social workers. All the same, as Pascoe indicates, many early-twentieth-century Protestant women reformers remained “unable to imagine” a mode of influence which did not rest on Victorian ideals.

Still, some religious women resisted. Several religious groups objected in particular to the implied nonsectarianism of modern social reform. Efforts to infuse modern social reform discourses with emphases on rationality, efficiency, and objectivity were challenged by some
religious leaders as radically diminishing the importance of particular religious values. Further, as Maureen Fitzgerald writes, some “outsider” religious groups objected to what they understood as “white, middle-class, elite” women leaders’ implicit or explicit attempts to continue to conjoin modern social reform with mainstream liberal Protestantism, despite the ostensible preference for nonsectarianism brought by scientism and statism.\textsuperscript{58} According to Fitzgerald, late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century social workers in particular often characterized explicitly religious social reform as “‘backward’ and as ‘retarding American progress’; they contrasted “nonsectarian” mainstream Protestant coalitions with “sectarian” charities that “represented the views of only one church or sect.”\textsuperscript{59} In light of this trend, “outsider” groups, such as Catholics, Jews, some conservative evangelical Protestants, and African American Protestants, saw the “moral and political values” embraced by modern women reformers as “at odds with their own religious traditions.”\textsuperscript{60}

Indeed, as Fitzgerald argues, contrary to suggestions that “women’s Progressive Era social work” was essentially secularized, case work was in fact based largely on the precepts of mainstream liberal Protestantism, in particular the Protestant tenant of Christian perfectionism which inspired reformers to try to eradicate poverty by “investigating” its causes, rather than simply giving “aid to the poor.”\textsuperscript{61} Such visions for attaining perfection through the mechanisms of social science ran contrary to early-twentieth-century Catholic and Jewish understandings of poverty as caused by “specific political and religious persecutions” which called for government protection and extensive, religiously-based benevolence programs, rather than nation-wide adoption of social work strategies.\textsuperscript{62} As Fitzgerald notes, early-twentieth-century social workers’ promotion of “a social science perspective,” with its “claims of objectivity,” in this way incited religious “outsiders”—many of whom were, not coincidentally, associated with immigrant
communities or minority ethnic groups—to object to the characterization of “outsider” religious charitable institutions as less credible than their mainstream Protestant equivalents. In this sense, the predominant role played by elite, middle-class women in the significant expansion of scientism and statism in the early-twentieth-century enmeshed conflicts over the place of religion in modern social reform within efforts to reinforce social hierarchies based on race and class distinctions.

Thus, crises in female moral authority and the exposure of the terms underpinning religious women’s moral authority as problematic indicated more than just challenges to Victorian cultural values. These patterns also pointed to the changing dimensions of women’s religiosity, including the emerging voices of some “outsider” religious leaders as advocates for modern social reform. With the rise in prominence of some sectarian religious traditions in the early-twentieth-century came the emergence of women religious leaders rhetorically inventing new modes of moral authority which attempted to demonstrate the ongoing viability of religious values even as they engaged aspects of modern social reform. Alongside these changing dimensions of women’s religiosity there arose opportunities for the invention of new arguments supporting religious women’s influence within the humanitarian sphere, arguments which diverged from exclusive focus on the problematic terminologies associated with Victorian female moral authority.

In the final section, I begin to examine this phenomenon, indicating how some early-twentieth-century women religious leaders did indeed respond to the crisis in Victorian female moral authority by inventing new justifications for their participation in the humanitarian sphere. I introduce the women that figure in the case studies that follow, Evangeline Booth, Aimee
Semple McPherson, and Dorothy Day, as creating new models of women’s religious authority that further exposed the limits of Victorian cultural values while at the same time arguing for the relevance of women’s religiosity to the advance of modern American social reform.

Religious Women Leaders in the Early-Twentieth-Century: Inventing New Justifications for Influencing the Humanitarian Sphere

For some religious women reformers, the rise of scientism and statism in the humanitarian sphere provoked active efforts to discover new arguments supporting women’s religious influence. The challenge brought to the ideological bases of female moral authority thus initiated a new struggle to uphold a value for women religious leaders’ active participation in modern social reform, while at the same time offering a cogent response to scientism and statism.

Jane Addams provides a significant, if unique, example of a case for religiously influenced reform work led by a woman that explicitly valued aspects of scientism and attempted to align the purposes of moral reform with the strategies of modern social reform." Addams founded the Chicago Hull-House, and later a nation-wide settlement house movement, as a private institutional network the principles and participants of which openly advocated for the adoption of scientism but still were offered as continuous with Christian tradition. She presented her mission as one which sought to cultivate emotions which would motivate “educated young men and women” to care for and extend charity to the poor." In this sense, Addams situated settlement house work within an older tradition of a middle-class Protestantism which posited charity work as calling elite to direct their sentiments of compassion into service on behalf of lower classes. All the same, she also argued that society’s “charitable effort” ought to be based
in “a more promising social-science approach.” Indeed, the network of reformers Addams led included a significant number of women social workers strongly invested in the development of social work as a professional field.

In her writings about the work of social reform, Addams expressed stout confidence in the potential for scientism to transform activists’ work among the poor. “We sometimes say that our charity is too scientific,” she wrote in *Democracy and Social Ethics*, “but we would doubtless be much more correct in our estimate if we said that it is not scientific enough.” In this sense, Addams recognized that the advance of scientism and the modern era meant the introduction of new ways of thinking about social reform. Still, for her it also meant a struggle to continue to posit some of the methods and motivations of Protestant Christian “charity.” As Louise Knight indicates, Addams embraced Christianity’s emphasis on “the moral urgency of sympathy and the moral imperatives of unselfishness and duty.” In addition, she shared the conviction of many Protestant advocates of social reform that Christian perfection might be obtained through ambitious schemes to transform the world, but ought not to be pursued through strategies which required Christian conversion as a primary method of reform. Addams’ settlement house movement reflected such beliefs, especially the notion that the practice of Christian love required cooperative benevolence, living and working alongside one’s neighbors rather than trying to “study” them.

As compelling a model as this was, it encountered the same early-twentieth-century trend toward fading popularity which afflicted many mainstream Protestant ministries. As Robert Handy writes, by the 1920s mainline Protestant churches were struggling to maintain attendance levels. The impetus for this came in part through what Handy describes as the increasing
influence within Protestant denominations of “the prevailing mood of the 1920s,” namely “the
general disillusionment of the postwar decade.”  The spread of disillusionment in the 1920s
discouraged the advancement of social reform strategies like Addams’ that held at their core
strong convictions at to the efficacy of idealism.  In this sense, Addams’ case for transforming
the terms of women’s authority in the humanitarian sphere encountered challenges not only due
to the rise of scientism and statism but also to the steadily declining influence of the mainstream
social Protestantism which had inspired, and to an extent initially buoyed, her reform efforts.

In contrast, Evangeline Booth, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Dorothy Day each stood
well-positioned to take on the myriad of challenges entailed in generating new arguments to
substantiate the influence of religious women in the humanitarian sphere.  As leaders in the
interwar period, each deeply invested in humanitarian projects and reform efforts, they
articulated new arguments which justified their work in addressing the economic and social cries
of the day and used terms which extended beyond the ideological limits entailed in traditional
Victorian female moral authority.  Unlike Addams, these women were not associated with
mainstream Protestantism.  Indeed each led social efforts from within “sectarian” religious
movements that, although very different from one another, were still collectively positioned as
“outsider” groups in relation to mainstream religious and secular organizations advocating for
social change.  As Handy notes, in the 1920s and 30s smaller religious groups, what he terms
“sects,” were increasing in popularity as attendance at mainstream Protestant churches was
declining, a trend which perplexed major Protestant denominations.  According to Handy, the
proliferation of such sects came about in part because of an “internal Protestant depression with
its consequent lack of clarity and energy in the churches.”  This general historical shift,
however, granted new energy to sectarian movements.  Indeed, Booth, McPherson, and Day each
invented new arguments for religious women’s humanitarian influence that were well adapted to modern trends by drawing on sectarian religious energies and values, as well as early-twentieth-century modern sensibilities.

Evangeline Booth articulated a vision for modern social reform born out of the nineteenth century holiness movement. During World War I, Commander Booth’s decision in 1917 to send ASA “lassies” to the European front to bake for and entertain American troops “catapulted the Army into the front ranks of American social service organizations.” In a March 1919 article written for *The War Cry*, Booth wrote of the ASA’s wartime success, “The evolution that has made the Salvation Army a world-wide organization, with extensive machinery for good, has simply overtaken us once again. And once again we will arise to meet the need.” With these words, Booth began to translate the ASA’s successful work at the European front into a contemporary model for religious women’s influence with regard to the advance of modern American social reform. Her model included transforming the ASA into a modern Christian service institution willing to partner with the emerging U.S. welfare state, but it also included arguments which continued to ground the organization’s service work in values for Christian service, feminine emotionality, and the notion that middle-class, white Protestant women were significant sources of moral authority.

Aimee Semple McPherson, itinerate Pentecostal evangelist and founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, similarly sought to combine conservative Protestant religious values and the strategies of modern social reform into a model for a distinct new type of feminine religious humanitarianism. An emphasis on Christian charity constituted a significant part of the ecumenical, nation-wide healing and preaching ministry McPherson had
begun in 1917. According to Edith Blumhofer, McPherson—whose mother, Minnie Kennedy, was actually a member of the American Salvation Army, and who had thus been influenced to embrace “social work” as necessary to Christian faith—had done so from the beginning of her public ministry. In fact, in the 1920s the Lady Evangelist welcomed “a steady stream” of “hurting women” into her Los Angeles home.\(^7\) In 1923, McPherson built the Angelus Temple as the ICFG’s headquarters located in Echo Park, a neighborhood in urban Los Angeles. Four years later, she added to ICFG’s growing institutional network the Temple commissary, an arm of Angelus Temple meant to organize the church’s charity work. The Temple commissary enabled McPherson to make what Grant Wacker characterizes as “serious and concrete efforts” to respond to deprivation in the local Los Angeles community, efforts which set ICFG’s social endeavors apart from typical Pentecostal “compassion ministries” which tended to be “local in scope and episodic in duration.”\(^7\)

McPherson, like Booth, thus demonstrated an approach to modern social reform which continue to advocate for the necessity of applying conservative Protestant values to humanitarian endeavors. “Instead of the usual breadline, established by they who institute a charitable department,” she wrote, in a June 1929 article in *The Bridal Call Foursquare*, ICFG’s monthly magazine, “we go right to the homes of the people and establish personal connections and thereby open the door for real missionary and evangelistic work.”\(^8\) The Temple commissary, McPherson claimed, would be a “throbbing, pulsing, friendly heart” ready to welcome and serve any in Los Angeles with need.\(^8\) McPherson posited the “heart” of the Temple commissary as opening “so many golden paths of service” to aid a 1920s and 30s Los Angeles public aching under economic distress and misfortune. McPherson’s revision of the previous era’s model of “friendly visiting” continued to argue for the importance of women’s volunteerism and women’s
advancement of middle-class culture to the ongoing funding and running of her Pentecostal social service institution. Still, McPherson added to her arguments a new vision for advancing organized social reform the modern that was based on the notion of a “new woman” who was driven to Christian service out of passion. Feminine emotionality and passion, as expressed through service, thus became “modern” forces propelling the vast and rapidly expanding charitable organization she led. Further, the mode of Christian service McPherson advocated provided the basis for her eventual attempts to apply her version of feminine, religiously inspired social reform on a nation-wide scale, this move orchestrated through both the nurturing of partnership between the ICFG’s charity network and the state and through McPherson’s full-throated trumpetings of nationalistic sentiments.

Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, also invented new arguments to reframe religious women’s influence in the humanitarian sphere, although she differed from Booth and McPherson in that she based her approach not in the tenets of conservative Protestantism but in the “outsider” values of radical Catholicism. Day, a former Greenwich Village radical who had converted to Catholicism in December 1927, saw the mounting swirl of economic and political crisis brought on by the Great Depression as an outcome of advancing industrialization and the public’s increasing reliance on the state for material provision. In sharp contrast to Booth and McPherson, Day posited what she thus understood as a “crisis of modernity” as not likely to be ameliorated by the further expansion of “efficient,” large-scale social service institutions operating within the ideological parameters of capitalism. Instead, in 1933, she, along with her mentor Peter Maurin, articulated a radical vision for meeting the exigencies of poverty and economic collapse with Catholic personalism, a philosophical perspective that emphasized the decentralization of political institutions and
encouraged Catholic charity. Day announced to her readers the message that the Catholic church had a “social program,” one which she translated into a concrete approach to modern social reform through her interpretations of two papal encyclicals at the core of 1930s, Catholic social teachings—Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 *Rerum Novarum* (On Capital and Labor) and Pope Pius XI’s 1931 *Quadragesimo Anno* (On the Reconstruction of the Social Order).

Day’s Catholic vision for social reform, radical though it was, responded to the advance of modernity in a way that upheld Catholic values for charity, sacrifice, and religious devotion. In her articulation of Catholic social reform, personal care for the poor and socially marginalized and the extension of the hospitality of the middle-class Catholic home to those hard hit by the Depression remained vital to social change. Day argued that personal care, sacrifice, and hospitality were distinctly feminine practices which remained capable of transcending the sorts of social hierarchies inherent to early-twentieth-century modern social reform strategies based in the precepts of scientism and statism. She thus associated radical Catholic personalism with feminine ideals, particularly ideas attached to the practices of mothering, to engage the humanitarian sphere. At the same time, she cast Catholic social teachings as fulfilling central aims of modernity, namely equality and systemic social justice. In this way, Day diverged from the pattern followed by Booth and McPherson by positing religious women’s influence as both capable of advancing the ideals of modern social reform yet simultaneously capable of critiquing trends towards the full embrace of scientism and statism in the humanitarian sphere.

My analysis will show how these three women religious leaders invented new arguments advocating religious women’s moral authority in the humanitarian sphere, which influenced the development of American humanitarianisms in the 1920s and 30s. I argue that Booth’s,
McPherson’s, and Day’s humanitarian rhetorics answered questions as to religious women’s authority as humanitarian leaders by rhetorically applying particular sectarian religious values to modern social reform contexts. In the following three chapters, I examine how Booth, McPherson, and Day each articulated humanitarian rhetorics that indicate the viability and rhetorical potency of religious women’s influence with regard to the advance of 1920s and 30s modern social reform. First, though, in concluding the introduction, I detail the methodology and particular methods used in this study, as well as the ways in which my analysis offers a contribution to rhetorical scholarship’s understanding of how rhetoric in general, and women’s religious rhetorics in particular, advanced social change during the interwar period.

Methodology and Methods

When it comes to 1920s and 30s American public culture, rhetorical studies has, as Benson implies, focused on identifying particularly trenchant “voices and images” within a “crowded” public engaged in efforts to “shape policies and attitudes” in response to wide-spread economic and social crises.⁸³ Even so, a perusal of rhetorical scholarship treating interwar years humanitarianisms suggests that religious rhetorics have not yet been fully accounted for within this crowd. As James Darsey and Joshua Ritter explain, “Religion lies close to the core of America’s genetic code; religious discourse is elemental to our national talk,” and yet, they add, “religious rhetoric has rarely been at the center of studies in American public address.”⁸⁴ The study of Evangeline Booth’s, Aimee Semple McPherson’s, and Dorothy Day’s humanitarian rhetorics will address this needed shift in focus as raised by Darsey and Ritter by examining how three case studies of religious rhetorics shaped and informed the 1920s and 30s progress of social change in America.
Rhetorical scholars have given some attention to two of the three figures featured in this comparative study of interwar years humanitarian rhetorics. Before reviewing that scholarship, I note that there is no work within rhetorical studies which examines Evangeline Booth’s religious rhetoric. Be that as it may, Booth’s discourse merits closer attention. As already indicated, at the close of World War I, the American Salvation Army, which Booth commanded from 1904 to 1934, rose dramatically in popularity and earned recognition in prominent public forums for its humanitarian endeavors. In this sense, Booth’s rhetoric constitutes a significant part of the religious discourse which Darsey and Ritter consider to be elemental to “our national talk.” Thus, this study’s inclusion of Booth’s humanitarian rhetoric seeks to contribute increased focus on an aspect of American public address which has been heretofore overlooked.

As for Aimee Semple McPherson, however, a collection of scholarship examines her public preaching ministry and its impact on 1920s and 30s American religious discourse. Harry Ebling and Janice Schuetz each present McPherson as a case study of successful preaching, Schuetz focusing on the connection between McPherson’s oral narratives and her efforts to persuade audiences to convert to evangelical Christian faith.\(^{85}\) Charles Bartow offers a study which describes how McPherson evangelized audiences “though theatrical performances and through the preaching of more conventional sermons.”\(^{86}\) Bartow gives some attention to how McPherson’s religious background and life-experience affected the development of her successful preaching ministry. Stephen Pullman focuses in particular on McPherson’s incorporation of faith healing into her preaching ministry, comparing her preaching style to that of two other prominent twentieth century female faith healers.\(^{87}\) Kristy Maddux analyzes McPherson’s preaching ministry by engaging the complexity of her religious discourse, particularly her persistent use of “evangelical discourse” during a period in religious history
typically thought by scholars to be dominated by “fundamentalist-modernist battles.”
Through her study of McPherson, Maddux demonstrates how 1920s “fundamentalist-modernist factionalism” failed to drown out evangelical discourse and how the very labels of evangelical, fundamentalist, and modernist remain fluid rather than fixed within American religious discourse.
Maddux’s study gives a perspicacious reading of McPherson’s sermonic texts, situating the Lady Evangelist within the complex scenery of 1920s and 30s religious revivalism. Nevertheless, an overview of the entire body of rhetorical scholarship which attends to McPherson’s preaching ministry shows a collective focus on the project of identifying patterns within her public sermons and, consequently, a neglect of attention to how McPherson’s rhetorical leadership of a prominent religious institution demonstrated efforts to impact not just America’s religious landscape but American social life more broadly conceived as well.

Rhetorical scholarship examining Dorothy Day’s leadership of the Catholic Worker demonstrates more thorough attention to the notion that religious discourse plays an important part with regard to the advance of social change within the American public. For instance, Carol Jablonski’s essay, “Resisting the ‘Inevitability’ of War,” proposes Dorothy Day’s and the Catholic Worker Movement’s resistance to war as “complicat[ing] depictions of the late 1930s as involving a seemingly inexorable march to war.”
Jablonski points to Day’s Catholic Worker writings in particular as tying U.S. militarism to other issues of social reform, such as racial prejudice, and the oppression of workers. In this sense, Day, particularly with regard to her anti-war writings, appears as a case study indicating Catholic social teachings as a means for radically and rhetorically resisting militarism. With a similar focus on Day’s pacifism advocacy, Sara Ann Mehltretter examines how leaders within the Catholic Worker “faced the challenge of maintaining their commitment to pacifism and nonviolence while still confronting the
establishment,” that is the establishment as represented by the Catholic Church’s governing hierarchy. Mehltretter indicates how, during the Vietnam War era, Day tried to establish a “rhetorical middle ground” between the “more conservative Catholic hierarchy” and “Catholic radicals within her own movement.” Other studies consider how Day promoted social change by rhetorically negotiating her identity as a radical Catholic. For instance, Jablonski considers how Day used humble irony in contesting a movement supporting her canonization as a Catholic saint in order to resist “the view that only a few, exceptional individuals can live in accordance with the Gospel.” Additionally, Dana Anderson examines how Day, in her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, constituted an identity which sought to reconcile her pre-conversion commitment to left-leaning radicalism with her Catholic faith. For all that, further analysis of Day’s 1930s *Catholic Worker* writings is required in order to elucidate her open challenges to other aspects of mainstream American culture besides militarism which she saw as obstructive to social change, namely the ascendancy of standards of scientism and professionalism within organized charities and the rising ascendency of the U.S. welfare state.

This analysis of Booth’s, McPherson’s, and Day’s humanitarian rhetorics, then, offers a significant contribution to larger discussions within rhetorical studies as to how religious rhetorics contributed to the advance of social change in America in the 1920s and 30s. It will do so by attending to the ways in which religious discourse, particularly that articulated by three women leaders of prominent charitable organizations, remained important to efforts to define and institute modern social reform during this period. In this way, this study proposes to bring the “national talk” of religious discourse into sharper focus with regard to its influence within the American society.
My approach to analyzing Booth’s, McPherson’s, and Day’s humanitarian rhetorics follows two methodological models within the field of rhetorical studies: case studies and comparison studies of significant rhetorical figures. There are many examples of rhetorical scholarship which illustrates case studies as useful to analyzing historical patterns of social change, as well as the potential for political agents to participate in social transformation. For instance, Stephen Brown’s essay, “Encountering Angelina Grimké: Violence, Identity, and the Creation of Radical Community,” indicates Angelina Grimké as exerting “authorial power” to address “urgent situational exigencies” in order to persuade public audiences to embrace abolitionist arguments. According to Browne, Grimké’s attempt to forward abolitionist goals through her public letter to William Lloyd Garrison exemplified public address that constitutes “an identity sufficiently powerful to shape [public] debate,” Grimké thus standing as a case study of a woman who lacked access to official political power enacting social change through rhetoric. Further, Burgchardt’s essay, “From Hull House to the Hague,” posits Jane Addams as exemplifying late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century anti-war rhetoric. Burgchardt divides Addams’ anti-war discourse into two discrete categories: speeches made between 1898 and 1909, and those made between 1915 and 1917. He finds continuity between the two sets of texts but also significant dissimilarities, the second set showing how Addams confronted strong resistance from the public to her criticism of the U.S.’s involvement in World War I. In this sense, Burgchardt presents Addams as a case study in the rhetorical complexity of anti-war rhetoric. Similarly, Jablonski’s “Resisting the ‘Inevitability’ of War” posits a case study in which Day’s pacifism rhetoric remains consistent despite significant challenges from the general public and from American Catholics in particular. All of these examples of case studies indicate women social reformers as particularly important to the further understanding of how
rhetoric influences social change. I add to them the dimension of using three case studies in order to elucidate how religious discourse affected social change within a prescribed time period, namely, the interwar period. The rhetorics included in this study collectively put a focus on the 1920s and 30s as a pivotal moment in rhetorical history, one which not only saw the negotiation of social change in response to extreme human need but also indicated the measure of influence religious rhetorics claimed in ushering in that change.

The comparison of rhetorical figures similarly engaged in advancing certain social issues constitutes another way in which rhetorical scholarship examines historical patterns of social change. Jennifer Borda, for example, compares second generation suffrage leaders in her essay, “Woman Suffrage in the Progressive Era.” Borda shows how, although Progressive Era ideology influenced late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century suffrage leaders, leaders within the movement as a whole remained diverse in terms of their organizational styles and modes of public influence. She locates the figures she studies both within the woman’s suffrage movement and within a larger turn among women reformers to embrace progressivism and, with it, various causes promoting the uplift of the general human condition. Borda illustrates the rhetorical comparison of women leaders who were engaged in similar social change projects but who did not coordinate their efforts through formal organizational structures. I follow her example in my comparison of women leaders who were similarly interested in advancing women’s religious influence with regard to modern social reform, albeit not through coordinated organizational efforts.

My case studies thus illustrate the ways in which women religious leaders exerted significant influence through their rhetorical leadership of charitable organizations. Previous
scholarship examining women’s public influence has demonstrated the importance of female moral authority to the advance of social change in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-centuries. Still, not enough attention has been paid to how religious women continued to have an impact on public debates surrounding social change even after the progress of early-twentieth-century modernity had significantly challenged and problematized the Victorian values on which late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century models of female moral authority were based. This dissertation seeks to add to rhetorical scholarship’s understanding of women’s participation in social change during the 1920s and 30s by situating three historically significant women religious leaders within a context of women social reformers who attempted to respond to the waning influence of female moral authority with innovative arguments justifying religious women’s participation in the humanitarian sphere.

In each of the following chapters, then, I analyze selections from the published writings of the three figures included in this study, focusing specifically on each leader’s writings for the periodical (or periodicals) which circulated within her particular religious group. Each chapter’s reading of a selection of periodical writings that addressed domestic interwar years’ humanitarian crises seeks to discover how women religious leaders answered the problematic status of female moral authority in the early-twentieth-century modern era. Booth, as Commander of the American Salvation Army ASA, published writings in *The War Cry*, the ASA’s weekly magazine. Her writings provided public updates on the Salvation Army’s service work among the needy and advocated for women’s conservative evangelical Protestantism as vital for addressing pressing national problems such as urban poverty. McPherson applied what she characterized as a feminine model of Pentecostalism to the public problems of vice, sickness, and poverty through her published writings in the *Bridal Call*, a
monthly magazine, and the *Foursquare Crusader*, a weekly news bulletin. Day published writings in the *Catholic Worker*, a monthly newspaper she founded concurrently with the Catholic Worker movement in 1933. Day’s writings applied Catholic social teachings in general, and a model of sacrifice and hospitality in particular, to the social disorder brought about by the collapse of economic and government systems during the Great Depression. I analyze Booth’s, McPherson’s, and Day’s contributions to their organizations’ respective religious periodicals in order to study how these leaders’ justifications for religious women’s humanitarian authority engaged interwar years public debates regarding modern social reform and thereby advanced social change.

From Booth’s writings for *The War Cry*, McPherson’s writings for *Bridal Call* and *Foursquare Crusader*, and Day’s writings for *Catholic Worker*, I selected texts for analysis which elucidate the distinct logics and perspectives these leaders brought to bear on issues related to humanitarianism and social reform. For instance, I identified *War Cry* texts in which Evangeline Booth argued for women’s evangelical “service” as meeting urgent public needs. I focused on texts in which Booth showed how her approach to Christian service could be applied to public issues such as urban poverty, prohibition, and the operation of the emerging U.S. welfare state. Further, I selected *Bridal Call* and *Foursquare Crusader* texts in which Aimee Semple McPherson argued that her example of passionate Pentecostal spirituality was important to the organization of charitable work, the execution of legislative reforms, and the pursuit of social reform during the Depression era. I focused on texts that illustrate how McPherson presented her version of “old time religion” as necessary for the generation of nation-wide social change. Finally, I chose texts which showed how Dorothy Day’s use of “personalism” in her *Catholic Worker* writings argued for an approach to Catholic social teachings which, in her view,
had the potential to transform America’s government and economic systems. I selected texts which illustrated how, through a maternal version of “personalism,” Day brought personal sacrifice, direct care for the poor and suffering, and hospitality to bear on various humanitarian crises brought about by the collapse of economic and social systems during the Great Depression. Appendix A provides a complete chronological bibliography of all primary texts incorporated into this analysis, organized by chapter.

In all of this, I trace how Evangeline Booth, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Dorothy Day were able to take up and respond to public debates regarding modern social reform practices through their participation in interwar years print culture, albeit from within localized communities and limited circulation networks. Print culture of the sort which had developed in the 1920s and 30s enabled Booth, McPherson, and Day to participate in public debates surrounding modern American social reform. As Theodore Peterson argues, post-World War I print culture expanded significantly with the introduction of magazines as a “commonplace” print medium, a trend sparked by an “expanding market, technological advances, and improvements in the logistics of magazine publishing.” Kevin Rozario echoes Peterson’s claims as to the rapid growth of print culture during the interwar year, adding that the 1920s saw an increase in the circulation of magazines by charitable and philanthropic institutions in particular. During the interwar years, magazines also provided religious groups of all sorts with means for participating in public culture and public debates. In fact, as Erin Smith argues, the 1920s brought a “religious renaissance” to American print culture. The American Salvation Army’s War Cry, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel’s Bridal Call and Foursquare Crusader, and the Catholic Worker movement’s Catholic Worker were publications which can be viewed as part of this trend.
My study of Booth’s, McPherson’s, and Day’s humanitarian rhetorics derives part of its methodological basis from the notion that rhetoric is a situated art which, as Lloyd Bitzer states, engages “a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance.”\(^{107}\) I examine each woman leader’s rhetoric from within a particular context which establishes how their respective responses to economic and social crises shaped distinctive approaches to understanding the imperative of religiously influenced modern social reform strategies. I thus follow James Jasinski’s conclusion that rhetoric both “responds to” and “creates” situations.\(^{108}\) Even so, I do not claim that Booth, McPherson, and Day participated in their respective rhetorical situations in a way that made their contributions “necessary to the completion of situational activity,” as Bitzer describes.\(^{109}\) Instead, this study avers Scott Consigny’s suggestion that the rhetorical situation is primarily framed by a rhetor’s engagement with topics, each topic being “an essential instrument for discovery or invention” and the collection of topics engaged by a line of discourse constituting “a realm in which the rhetor thinks and acts.”\(^{110}\) I present my study as in line with Mary Garret and Xiaosui Xiao’s claim, derived in part from Consigny’s study of topics, that rhetors participate in a rhetorical situation in three ways: by generating just such a realm for thinking and action, by cultivating “an audience’s expectations about the appropriate forms of discourses,” and by enabling an audience to recognize and interpret “a rhetorical exigency.”\(^{111}\) Along these lines, I trace how the figures in this study participated in public debates surrounding modern social reform from within the immediate context of particular, localized, and demographically limited religious groups but also through their engagement of topics broadly considered important to resolving the era’s various social and economic crises.
Specifically, I examine how each figure addressed the stock issues of poverty, organized benevolence or charity, the U.S. welfare state, social reform, legislative reform, and moral reform, all of which were entailed in public debates surrounding 1920s and 30s American humanitarianisms. I treat each woman leader’s contribution to these debates separately, although with each chapter adding an analysis of the ways in which these leaders’ individual efforts to establish religious women’s early-twentieth-century authority in the humanitarian sphere suggest a common struggle among interwar years religious women leaders to invent and articulate arguments upholding the importance of women’s religiosity within the context of modern social reform. To build this line of argument, I examine my case studies in order of their respective historical assents to prominence within the humanitarian sphere. I start with Evangeline Booth who helped the ASA emerge as a respected social service provider after World War I and remained ASA Commander until 1934. I move on to Aimee Semple McPherson who founded the Temple Commissary in the 1920s and continued to advocate Pentecostal approaches to modern social reform through the 1930s. I conclude with Dorothy Day who co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement in 1933 and continued to lead that organization up until her death in 1980.

3 Taylor, Secular Age, 246-247.
4 Taylor, Secular Age, 246-247.
5 Taylor, Secular Age, 256-257.


10 Carlson-Thies, 272-273.


13 Elshtain, xxii.

14 Carlson-Thies 271.

15 Elshtain, xxiv.


17 Koven and Michel, 1077.

18 Koven and Michel, 1078.


20 Sklar, xiii.

21 Koven and Michel, 1085.

22 Pascoe, 34-37.

23 Sklar, xiii.

24 Pascoe, 51.

25 Pascoe, 51.


27 Tyrrell, 13.

28 Gross, 31.

29 Gross, 31.

30 Gross, 31.

31 Gross, 31.

33 Bremner, *From the Depths*, 124.


36 Carlson-Thies, 270.


38 Bremner, *From the Depths*, 124.

39 Bremner, *From the Depths*, xii, 124, 138.

40 Bremner, *From the Depths*, 138.

41 Gordon, 175.

42 Gordon, 175.

43 Gordon, 175.

44 Gordon, 73-77.

45 Gordon, 168.

46 Gordon, 168.

47 Gross, 44.

48 Gross, 44.

49 Gross, 44.


51 Pascoe, 192.

52 Pascoe, 193-94.

53 Pascoe, 197.

54 Pascoe, 190


56 Kunzel, 21.

57 Pascoe, 194.


Jane Addams, Democracy and Social Ethics (New York: Macmillan, 1902), http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL:492409, 64.

Knight, Citizen, 174.

Knight, Citizen, 174.

Knight, Jane Addams, 71.


Handy, 6.

Handy, 10. “Sects” were originally characterized by Max Weber as types of religious groups that opposed “the worldly values of the established church” through a return to “a pure, inner-directed life guided by the moral example of Christ and his apostles.” (Patricia Chang, “Escaping the Procrustean Bed: A Critical Analysis of the study of Religious Organizations, 1930-2001,” in Handbook of the Sociology of Religion, ed. Michele Dillon [Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 125.) As communities and movements, sects historically created space for challenges to mainstream churches and dominant religious beliefs. (Grace Davie, The Sociology of Religion [Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2007], 163.)


Mehltretter, “Dorothy Day,” 22.


Browne, 56.

Burgchardt.

Jablonski, “Resisting,” 421.


Booth, McPherson, and Day each published writings in other mediums besides the periodicals which were associated with their particular religious groups. For instance, many of Booth’s public speeches were reprinted in pamphlet or book form. Collections of Booth’s reprinted speeches and *War Cry* writings include: *Toward a Better World* and *The Only Thing*. Booth also authored several works which were not initially printed in the *War Cry*. 40
These include: *The War Romance of the Salvation Army* (co-authored by Grace Livingston Hill), *Woman*, and forwards to William Booth’s *Broken Souls* and Hugh Redwood’s *God in the Slums*. As for McPherson, many of her sermons were also reproduced in book or pamphlet form. For instance, *This Is That*, first published in 1923, reprinted a collection of McPherson’s sermons as well as several of the visions and prophesies which she spoke in her role as head pastor of the Angelus Temple. McPherson also authored several autobiographies, including: *Give Me My Own God*, and *Aimee Semple McPherson: The Story of My Life*. Finally, Day published several pamphlets and, additionally, wrote several articles for Catholic periodicals besides the *Catholic Worker*, including *Commonweal*, *America*, *Catholic Mind*, *Catholic Digest*, *Preservation of the Faith*, and *Interracial Review*. Day also penned several autobiographies which offered accounts of her personal history as well as first-hand accounts of Catholic Worker history. These include: *From Union Square to Rome*, *Houses of Hospitality*, *The Long Loneliness*, and *Loaves and Fishes*. My project, however, does not incorporate analysis of my case studies’ writings beyond their publications in the periodicals which were associated with their respective organized religious groups.

101 According to Susan Mitchem, National Archivist at the Salvation Army Archives and Research Center, the Salvation Army produced one American edition of *The War Cry* up until January 1921, at which point Eastern, Central, and Western editions were printed. In 1927, a Southern edition was added. As Mitchem notes, “during the ‘split’ publications, much of the information was similar” between the various editions (Susan Mitchem, letter to the author, July 27, 2010). The texts from *The War Cry* cited in this dissertation from the years 1921 through 1939 are from the Eastern edition.

102 McPherson founded *Bridal Call* in 1917. The *Foursquare Crusader* was first published in 1927. *Bridal Call* was discontinued as an ICFG monthly publication at the close of 1933. In 1934, ICFG began to print the *Bridal Call- Crusader Foursquare* as a weekly publication. The ICFG’s weekly bulletin kept that name through 1935, but in 1936 its title reverted back to *Foursquare Crusader*.

103 Anne and Alice Klejment provide an index of Dorothy Day’s copious writings titled *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker: A Bibliography and Index*. They note that, “Dorothy Day’s writings in the CW are contained in this list, but much of her work was unsigned. We were unable to identify all of the unsigned material and pass that task on to others” (xv). The list of Day’s writings compiled for use in my dissertation project contains only those writings identified by Klejment and Klejment as reasonably attributed to Day. (Anne Klejment and Alice Klejment, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker: A Bibliography and Index*, [New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986].)


109 Bitzer, 61.


CHAPTER 2:
EVANGELINE BOOTH AND THE MANAGEMENT OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

October 1919 marked a high point for the American Salvation Army (ASA) and its beloved commander, Evangeline Booth. At that time, Booth received from the hand of President Woodrow Wilson the Distinguished Service Medal and with it a glowing citation. The citation read, “For exceptionally meritorious and distinguished served as Commander of the Salvation Army in the United States. She has been tireless in her devotion to her manifold duties. The contribution of the Salvation Army toward winning the war is conspicuous, and the results obtained were due in a marked degree to the great executive ability of its Commander.”¹ In accepting the award, however, Booth, the daughter of Salvation Army founder William Booth, declared, “The Salvation Army has had no new success. We have only done an old thing in a new way.”² If only Booth’s bold move to extend the ASA’s social mission of service to the World War I European front was indeed new. President Woodrow Wilson’s 1917 declaration of war led Booth to the realization, as Diane Winston writes, “that a woman’s touch would be welcome at the front lines.”³ She sent both men and women Salvationists to set up “huts” in war-torn France, shacks equipped for donut and pie baking, and other wholesome entertainments for homesick soldiers. About 250 men and women went to serve, and the result, according to Winston, was a spectacular public relations coup. Booth’s “mothering” Salvation Army lassies
(affectionately called Sallies), who “sewed clothes, banked paychecks, and prayed with the men going off to fight,” launched the ASA and Booth into “national prominence.”

Yet, Booth was right to say that the ASA’s new work of wartime service was still in line with the organization’s “old” way of service. One aspect of the “old” in the Commander’s leadership during World War I was her ensconcing of the ASA’s service mission in a vision for bringing Christian women’s propensity for tender care, virtuous sacrifice, and zealous devotion to bear on a situation marked by adversity. Attempts like this to tie moral action during a time of crisis to practices explicitly and implicitly ascribed to women had proven vital to Booth’s command from its beginning, starting in the first decade of the twentieth century with her stage performance of “The Commander in Rags,” an extravagant play in which Booth dressed up as a “White Angel of the Slums” and reenacted her experiences working as a Slum Sister in London’s East End. Booth’s “Commander in Rags” spectacular became a tool for everything from member recruitment to fundraising for disaster relief. Over ten years later, Booth’s dispatching of the Sallies to the WWI front again demonstrated how her pattern of deploying ostensibly “womanly” strategies for addressing humanitarian crises served as a means for extending the ASA’s influence as a Christian service institution.

The success of her bold campaign aside, the ASA’s wartime service posed a sort of crisis for Booth’s leadership. Reflecting on the new exigencies provoked by the organization’s postwar acclaim, the Commander wrote, “The great crisis of the world’s mammoth war produced exceptional opportunities and also brought almost unbearable responsibilities. The whole demanded special enterprise and extraordinary executive ability.” As to how the ASA planned to cope with its increased responsibilities moving into the 1920s, she explained, “Such abundant
opportunity for new spheres of activity has rolled in upon the Army for effective service during the past two years that it has been with the utmost difficulty we have been able to legislate to keep pace with the demands made upon our strength, and upon our time and upon our forces.”

Thus Booth suggested that postwar public recognition presented an ongoing need for ASA “mothering” on American domestic fronts, but the postwar modern era called for a different sort of executive “mother” to stand at the helm of “new spheres of activity,” an executive manager still invested in Christian values for service and sacrifice but able to mobilize such activity on an heretofore unprecedented scale.

As Judy Wajcman suggests, executive management of the sort invoked by Booth was not, historically speaking, the “place” of women. In fact, with the development of management as a leadership position at the turn-of-the-century came the incorporation of “a male standard” which positioned women “as out of place.” Just the same, as Wajcman notes, alongside the early-twentieth-century “growth of management” as a “specialized profession” ensconced in “masculinized and paternalistic” ideologies, there arose a role for women in “personnel management,” or management which “recognized social and emotional considerations by focusing on the human side of organizations.” Personnel management constituted a field for women to exercise executive authority, particularly with regard to social impulses and emotions. Management as defined in this sense proved a site for the development of the sort of public authority pursued by early-twentieth-century women leaders like Evangeline Booth. As Booth demonstrated, women leaders in the 1920s and 30s proved exceedingly capable when it came to wielding executive authority through organizations and agencies dedicated to meeting human needs and managing social relations. Booth differed from some of her executive peers in that, as a religious woman, she rooted her role as manager in notions of the Christian woman as a
virtuous care provider with a propensity for sacrificial service. In this she showed how the ideal of a modern manager, authoritative, expert, and efficient, might be molded to fit the profile of a Christian woman leader. On top of that, she illustrated how the new model of feminine, religiously inspired humanitarian leadership she invented might address the diminishing sway of older Victorian cultural values which had proven so vital to the ASA in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-centuries but threatened to undermine and discredit the organization’s humanitarian work given the ascendancy of modern attitudes in the 1920s and 30s. The result was the rhetorical invention of a new way to justify religious women’s participation in the humanitarian sphere—the way of a “born again” woman leader’s “efficient” management of a Christian service institution.

In this sense, Booth’s retooling of the ASA during the interwar period can be seen as indicating more than just a response to the organization’s postwar increase in popularity. In fact, I argue that Booth’s efforts to re-envision the ASA’s “old” way of service in the 1920s and 30s constituted a rhetorically powerful response to modern challenges to those older Victorian notions of female moral authority. In this chapter, I analyze in particular how Booth’s invention of her leadership role in the 1920s and 30s American humanitarian sphere posited the ASA as a sort of Christian “machine” and the Commander as an executive manager who embraced modern social reform strategies, even as she continued to uphold a value for feminine service and sacrifice. Booth’s leadership cast the ASA as well-adapted to scientific innovation, well-suited to partner with the emerging U.S. welfare state, but also consistent with the mores of conservative evangelical Protestantism. Perhaps even more importantly, Booth’s 1920s and 30s efforts to lead the ASA as a modern Christian service machine posited her style of leadership as useful to the state. By casting herself as a preeminent protector of the nation’s collective virtue,
Booth responded to early-twentieth-century challenges to the Victorian ideals undergirding women’s public moral authority with the argument that her influence in the humanitarian sphere held the capacity to increase the resilience of the American nation.

I begin my analysis of Booth’s invention of new grounds justifying religious women’s humanitarian authority in the interwar period by situating her leadership within a tradition of ASA women leaders who at times embraced and at times reflected cultural challenges to female moral authority as it was aligned with Victorian cultural values. I examine how women leaders in the ASA at the close of the nineteenth century constructed their moral authority in ways which were, to varying degrees, syncretic with what Pascoe calls the modern era’s “new gender system.” I suggest that Evangeline Booth continued the trend of ASA syncretism with her efforts to re-negotiate the problematic terms of female moral authority, primarily through the invention of her role as the executive manager of a Christian service institution. Then, in three separate “movements,” I trace how Booth’s rhetorical invention of humanitarian authority emerged in the interwar years as a powerful response to the waning influence of Victorian cultural values. I examine: first, Booth’s early-1920s fundraising and recruiting efforts, the key to whose management and operation was the mobilization of feminine service and sacrifice; second, Booth’s 1920s and 30s campaign on behalf of prohibition and partnership with the U.S. welfare state which argued the Commander’s influence as extending the state’s authority; third, Booth’s positing in the late 1920s and early 30s of her leadership as advancing American nationalism. In all of this, I show how Booth not only justified her authority in the humanitarian sphere but also invented a role which posited her leadership as a vital source of social influence in the modern era.
Women Leaders in the American Salvation Army:
Synthesizing the New Woman into a “Modern” Model for Christian Service

William and Catherine Booth founded the Salvation Army in mid-nineteenth-century out of a desire to promote practical religion—religion which balanced passionate evangelical Christian faith with effective service to society. According to Winston, the Booths derived the vision for their new movement from the example of revivalists who “encouraged worshipers to seek salvation actively” and exhorted “converted Christians” to take up “a responsibility to work for the Millennium” through the pursuit of social reform causes. From the Wesleyan and Holiness movements, they borrowed dual emphases on “the doctrine of sanctification” and the tenet of a “second blessing,” both of which called believers to renounce “worldly pursuits” and strive instead for a “postmillennial hope for an imminent Kingdom of God,” a sacred society to be inaugurated through Christian holiness. To ensure the expediency of their mission, the Booths adopted from Methodism a hierarchical organizational structure, which only later was developed into a leadership system modeled after military hierarchy.

The Salvation Army doctrines inscribed by the Booths in 1878 confidently affirmed standard conservative evangelical tenets, such as belief in “the divine inspiration of scripture, the dual nature of Jesus, and the reality of hell.” Still, the Booths stood convinced that modern believers needed to not only hold fast to right doctrine but also to act practically. A religion to suit the era needed to “spark and sizzle,” rather than mire audiences in erudite theological gloom. Preachers needed to be “red-hot” in order to break through the public’s ambiguity. Perhaps most importantly, religious adherents needed to practically serve those in need in order to gain attention and, hopefully, the public’s affections.
When the Salvation Army extended its operations to the United States in the 1880s, the plan for winning public affections through practical service was expanded to include efforts to recruit women leaders, and even to “place women in leadership positions over men.”¹⁵ As Winston notes, women were indeed drawn to the “independence that the Army offered.”¹⁶ Women recruits were given freedom to “travel, live independently, and serve as spiritual leaders.”¹⁷ Even so, back at Salvation Army headquarters in London, Catherine Booth, in her role as Army Mother, left the “rollicking” open-air preaching in the slums to her husband, William, while she made living room visits to London’s “wealthiest citizens” in order to gain the support of the city’s most prominent “Christian businessmen.”¹⁸ Her appeals followed a line of reasoning that cast the Salvation Army as a sort of retaining wall for London’s burgeoning Victorian middle-class, a “safety valve” meant to release “just enough steam to keep the victims of industrial capitalism complaisant.”¹⁹ “What if these neglected multitudes should rise up and assert themselves,” she stated, “what will become of your houses and land then?”²⁰ Catherine Booth’s work of fundraising thus began the trend of Salvation Army women leaders translating a vision for practical Christian service into a strategy for reinforcing Victorian middle-class economic interests and cultural values.

From 1886 to 1896, Ballington and Maud Booth, the former William and Catherine Booth’s second born child, took over command of the American Salvation Army, their leadership expanding the New York City-based organization’s church planting and public preaching ministry to include a rescue mission in city slums.²¹ Maud Booth carried on the sort of Christian service work modeled by Catherine Booth, moving among “New York’s business, civic, and social leaders,” a refined woman seeking support and new recruits from among the middle-classes.²² Still, the American co-commander needed to add new material to her
presentations on women leaders’ work in the Salvation Army due to the fact that her audiences were experiencing a new trend developing at the close of the nineteenth century, namely the emergence of the “new woman,” a modern paradigm enticing women to leave, or at least reevaluate, women’s traditional roles as wives and mothers. In public presentations on the subject, Maud Booth contrasted the new woman with the “born again” woman who discovered independence and purpose not through careerism or sexual freedom but through practical religion. Her ideal of womanhood called Christian women, even those who had achieved independence and leadership stature through service work, to remain “rooted in the love of home, family, and religion.”

In many ways, Maud Booth derided the new woman. Nevertheless, as co-commander of the ASA, she attempted to incorporate (or at least give a nod to) several aspects of modern womanhood that were becoming increasingly popular in late-nineteenth-century public culture. For instance, as Winston notes, even Maud Booth’s most strident lectures against the new woman implied support for “women’s right to education, athletic exercise, and work.” In addition, in her writings for the *War Cry* and in public lectures, Maud Booth cast the born again ASA woman as a “Woman Warrior” who combined “tender, gentle, loving attributes” with “courage, strength, action, sacrifice, and loyalty.” The Woman Warrior defied middle-class standards for politeness, the difficult (and often messy) work of evangelism and service frequently requiring women to ignore the dictates of “social convention or class expectations.” Through the Woman Warrior, Maud Booth led Salvation Army women to directly challenges aspects of Victorian cultural values. Her willingness to embrace some of the nuances of the new woman demonstrated the ASA’s general willingness during this era to see changes in public culture as opportunities for improving public perceptions (especially among the working- and
lower-middle-classes) of the organization’s typically unconventional style. In this sense, Maud Booth illustrated an emerging trend among ASA women leaders: the embrace of some Victorian cultural values but with the recognition that many of the older ideals of womanhood were becoming increasingly problematic to the ASA’s cause.

Part of the outcome of Maud Booth’s attempt to create a sort of syncretic model of ASA service and the new woman was the decision to send female officers to live in urban tenements and assist the poor as neighbors rather than as distant outsiders. As a teenager in London, Maud Booth had helped pioneer this sort of “social outreach work” in “the city’s poorest neighborhoods.” In 1889, she brought the strategy of dispatching “Slum Sisters” to live in urban slums to America. The idea was for women Salvationists to “develop trusting relationships” with the people they served, relationships which would promote the spread of conservative evangelical Protestantism among the lower-classes. As Winston writes, the model of the selfless Slum Sister (also called “slum angel”) who fulfilled her mission by “nursing, cleaning, cooking, and tending children” stood in contrast to that of the Woman Warrior who was, among other things, an assertive public preacher and an aggressive proponent of service work. According to Winston, over time, the Victorian ideal entailed in the slum angel overshadowed that of the Woman Warrior. This change was due in part to the fact that Maud Booth’s plan to increase the ASA’s presence in urban slums required money, and the need for money led Maud and Ballington Booth to stage “a vigorous campaign of marketing the Salvation Army” to “respectable, moneyed Americans.” Their focus on publicity and fundraising certainly increased the impact of the ASA’s institutional work during this period. All the same, the strategy also necessitated a renewed emphasis on the connection between older Victorian cultural values and the ASA’s brand of women’s leadership.
As evidence of this trend, when Maud and Ballington Booth resigned their command in 1896, *War Cry* columns explicitly addressed to the Woman Warrior stopped, the turn-of-the-century marking a return among ASA’s women leaders to a what Winston terms a “more conventional” model of the Christian woman service worker. That year, Frederick and Emma Booth-Tucker took over leadership of the ASA, the latter the fourth child of William and Catherine Booth. Their joint command brought with it further organizational restructuring and the adoption of “a business ethic of efficiency, rationality, centralized control, and accountability.” The Booth-Tucker’s new organizational goals significantly increased the ASA’s network of “shelters, food depots, slum posts, and rescue homes.” Still, even with a new “business ethic,” the ASA continued to rely on the moral quality of its women leaders. For instance, Emma Booth-Tucker, following her predecessors, developed a public lecture and slide show called “Love and Sorrow,” a program designed to spread the ASA’s evangelistic message and introduce the public to the organization’s work among the urban poor. In presentations like “Love and Sorrow,” Emma Booth-Tucker showcased her qualities as a “womanly woman,” emphasizing her role in the organization as a “wife, mother, and helpmeet.” For all that, her show did make a serious contribution to emerging late-nineteenth-century debates surrounding issues of urban poverty. Through “Love and Sorrow,” Emma Booth-Tucker articulated the ASA’s particular approach to “religious philanthropy.” Thus this turn-of-the-century commander continued stoutly hold on to older Victorian ideals of womanhood despite the increasingly modern bent of the ASA’s social reform strategies.

Emma Booth-Tucker’s persistent embrace of Victorian womanhood did add an “humane dimension” to the plans for innovation and expansion the ASA was bringing to its service networks during this period, a quality which seemed lacking in other “modern” charitable
institutions like the COS. Further, the Booth-Tuckers attempted to balance modern social reform innovations with older Victorian models of Christian service, to give an example, by replacing the pastoral and practical ministries of the Slum Sisters with a “Slum Brigade” of women Salvationists who operated nurseries for working mothers, Slum Settlements, and Rescue Homes, all institutions which offered help for wayward women. The Booth-Tucker’s administration ended suddenly and tragically in the fall of 1903 following Emma Booth-Tucker’s death in a train accident. William Booth’s 1904 appointment of Evangeline Booth as the ASA’s next commander brought with it a fundamentally different direction when it came to justifying religious women’s influence in the humanitarian sphere, even as it in many ways continued the trend of blending public culture with aspects of conservative evangelical Protestantism.

Evangeline Cory Booth, born December 25, 1865, was the seventh of William and Catherine Booth’s eight children, their fourth daughter. Booth took up a call to public ministry at an early age and quickly achieved a reputation as a bold leader, a compelling public speaker, and a successful administrator. Early in her Salvation Army career, Booth established a reputation as a problem solver. William Booth frequently deployed his daughter “wherever Army activities were impeded by unfriendly mobs.” In fact, Evangeline Booth was dispatched to New York in 1896 to diffuse a crisis caused by Maud and Ballington Booth’s attempt to secure the ASA’s independence from the International Salvation Army headquartered in London. “Send Eva!” had been William Booth’s cry in that situation, and it became his directive once again after the resignation of Frederick Booth-Tucker in 1903.

During her tenure as ASA Commander, Evangeline Booth increased the tempo and intensity of efforts to develop the ASA as a modern Christian service institution. From the start
of her command, Booth put into action a plan to acquire more properties and significantly improve those buildings which were already a part of the ASA’s institutional matrix. Her plan progressed so quickly that she was able to proclaim as early as January 1908 that, “Rapid strides have been taken in the acquisition of properties, and for style, equipment and location, or new buildings surpass almost everything that has been attained heretofore.”

Booth’s prediction in that year that her tenure would yield “the greatest advances along property lines in The Army’s history in America” proved true with, to mention a few specific “strides,” the opening of the Cherry Street Settlement in 1906 and the Booth Memorial Hospital in 1913, the improvement of the seven-story industrial home in New York City, and, between the years 1904 and 1913, the increase of relief institutions from 195 to 413.

Booth saw the public recognition which resulted from this progress as an indication of her scheme’s success, remarking, “The Army’s daily widening circle of sympathetic onlookers, viewing our work from a somewhat wider range, are continually expressing their congratulations.” Even so, she understood that public support was not consequential to her efforts; it was, in fact, vital for continued progress. To that end, Booth’s scheme for institutional expansion included a concerted effort to retool the ASA’s image, shaping it into a “respected provider of social services.”

One of the ways Booth went about this task was by re-organizing the ASA’s fundraising system, “elevating it from a ‘shoestring operation’ conducted on street corners” to an efficient method designed to gather large sums, not from working-class populations but from the upper classes and “the capitalist.” In this sense, Booth continued the theme of outreach to the well-heeled begun by her predecessors, although going about it “more boldly” than had ASA commanders before her. In fact, in a December 1913 War Cry article titled, “Why the Capitalist Should Help the Salvation Army,” Booth openly encouraged donations to the ASA as
a means toward resolving class conflict, to the advantage of capitalists. “The Salvation Army is having a mighty effect upon Labor along these very lines,” she intoned. “It is making tens of thousands the whole world over of honest, sober, consistent, to-be-depended-upon working-men, and because of this great contributive feature to Capital’s interest, if for nothing higher, the capitalist should support the movement.”

To this strategy, she added an intentional effort to translate the spiritual “battle” in which she saw the ASA as engaged into “scientific” terms. Booth’s conception of spiritual battle, such as that articulated in a February 1906 “Manifesto” to “her troops” calling them to fight “the blackest POWERS OF DARKNESS,” appeared out of step with modern science. Nonetheless, Booth linked the ASA’s spiritual goals to the success of its social work, as in an April 1908 War Cry article where she exclaimed that the ASA’s “machinery” with “its weak places repaired, its strong points magnified, our weapons sharpened and our hands found more efficient in their use” was well-positioned to provide not only material relief but also spiritual revival. Moving into the 1920s and 30s, she added to this strategy a plan to navigate seismic shifts in the humanitarian sphere toward government-directed benevolence by offering the ASA’s social services in partnership with the emerging U.S. welfare state. In all of this, Booth secured the ASA’s ongoing success as a respected social service provider by adapting the organization’s older methods to the mores of modern social reform.

Booth’s efforts in the 1900s and 10s to develop the ASA as a modern Christian service institution were impelled not just by her willingness to continue tying the ASA’s service work to scientism, statism, and the advance of American capitalism but also by her ongoing intention to posit the positive social impact of conservative evangelical Protestant women’s service and
sacrifice on behalf of humanitarian causes. As evidenced by her frequent staging of the extravagant narrative, “The Commander in Rags,” Booth emulated her predecessors in portraying a feminine model of Christian service and sacrifice in order to promote the ASA’s version of practical religion. In taking this strategy even further, Booth, in Winston’s terms, “stamped the organization in her own image.” She used performances, public speeches and appearances, and “a steady barrage of coverage in Army publications and the secular press” to make her appearance as a woman leader synonymous with the ASA’s public reputation as a respected service provider. She did this in part by bringing to her public image a distinctly “womanly” appearance which included the frequent sporting of elaborate dress uniforms, complete with old-fashioned bonnets and capes. In addition, she made intentional efforts to engage publicly in “small acts of kindness,” such as delivering gifts of Christmas toys to the local schools near her suburban New York home. Booth, who, unlike her predecessors, was never married and led the ASA independent of a male partner, nonetheless exhibited a distinctly feminine leadership style which, Winston notes, was often negatively portrayed as quirky, demanding, imperious, and sometimes histrionic. The reception of Booth’s cultivated image by the American public and by ASA members was at times overflowing with praise, even as it was, on other occasions, scathingly critical.

Despite the success of Booth’s expansion plans in the first decades of the twentieth century, the 1920s and 30s brought increased challenges and complications to the belief and value structures upon which the ASA’s model of Christian women’s leadership had been traditionally based. As Winston suggests, in the interwar period, the ASA’s past pattern of syncretism with public culture was beginning to influence the organization to revisit some aspects of the model of the new woman with, of course, significant modification. “Confronted
by societal changes in women’s roles,” Winston writes, the ASA portrayed women Salvationists “as exemplars of freedom and equality,” while simultaneously illustrating the ASA’s approach to new womanhood as resistant to “the excesses associated with the New Woman or the flapper.” As this analysis indicates, with the advance of the new gender system, Booth faced an exigency—the need to promote the ASA as a Christian service institution in tune with scientism, statism, and American capitalism, but also with the new woman who was quickly becoming an important actor within the humanitarian sphere. Booth’s task required her to do more than just acquire properties, improve buildings, and streamline fundraising systems. She also needed to reinvent arguments justifying her leadership in humanitarian sphere. Her approach to this task would find her continuing to uphold a value for conservative evangelical Protestant women’s service and sacrifice. Yet it also meant positing her own executive management of the ASA as an indicator of her organization’s ability to balance “womanly” religiosity and elements of early-twentieth-century modernism. In the next section, I examine how Booth pursued this task, specifically how her emerging model of the new woman as a “born again” executive manager took hold in her 1920s fundraising and recruiting schemes. In these leadership efforts, she demonstrated how her approach to humanitarianism could lead to the empowerment a modern Christian service machine.

The Home Service Fund and the “One Hundred Per Cent” Campaign: Booth as the Born Again Manager of a Christian Service Machine

Evangeline Booth was far from alone in her desire to build a network of benevolence institutions in line with the mores of modern scientism. In fact, with the embrace of the “new view of poverty” in the late-nineteenth-century, the drive to develop science based welfare
services precipitated a variety of changes with regard to how charitable institutions were organized. According to Roy Lubove, these changes included “a potent, centralized pressure for efficiency” which prompted the creation in the 1920s and 30s of community-based social welfare systems efficiently funded by local community chests. Community chests, by definition, solicited individual donations not for separately branded service agencies but for an organized network of service institutions. This shift toward a focus on efficiency, rationality, and social reform simultaneously precipitated a shift in the locus of responsibility for solving social problems—from individual donors attending to the needy in local communities to a “rather abstract and remote” bureaucratic structure which oversaw large, city-wide networks of welfare providers. The bureaucratization of service work in the 1920s led to the institution of training methods for service workers meant to replace late-nineteenth-century volunteer “apprenticeship” models. Still, as Regina Kunzel argues, often professionalization also meant the erasure of sentimentality and religious motivation from social work, this change constituting a challenge to the Victorian cultural values at the center of some religious women leaders’ moral authority in the humanitarian sphere.

Booth stood at a crossroads amidst all these changes. On the one hand, the ASA readily embraced turn-of-the-century emphases on organizational efficiency, institutional expansion, and social reform. On the other, into the 1920s and 30s Booth continued to tie the ASA’s version of conservative evangelical Protestant social reform to aspects of conservative evangelical Christian religiosity, specifically the notion that middle-class Protestant women’s service and sacrifice on behalf of the poor and socially marginalized offered the best hope for transforming declining social and economic conditions. In fact, during the interwar years, Booth crafted an argument for how the seeming disconnect between modern scientism and statism and the ASA’s value for
what she characterized as feminine service and sacrifice might be reconciled—namely by positing the ASA as a Christian service machine managed by a born again woman who carried profound moral authority.

Booth’s efforts to re-organize the ASA’s fundraising systems during this period illustrate the ways in which the Commander negotiated the crossroads between modern social reform and the ASA’s brand of conservative evangelical Protestantism. In 1918 she initiated a scheme for increasing the ASA’s fundraising efficiency. Her plan’s main feature was a campaign designed to raise one million dollars for the ASA’s wartime work. From its beginning, Booth pitched her wartime funding campaign as contributing valuable feminine service to America’s war effort. The money, she argued, helped substitute the motherly love soldiers were missing from home. As she wrote in a February 1918 War Cry article titled, “That Million Dollars,” money meant “hope and help, comfort and cheer, pleasure and eternal profit in multiplied measure to our heroes across the sea, relief and gratitude unspeakable overwhelming the homes they have left for liberty’s sacred cause.” Money donated to the ASA contributed motherly comfort to American troops fighting at the front and brought the influence of “home” to “our heroes” fighting for “liberty’s sacred cause.” It did this by training ASA Sallies sent overseas “in self-abandonment to the needs of others.” The Sallies took the ASA to “the front with its service,” but, nonetheless, she wrote, “huts cannot be built and maintained on zeal alone, expenses cannot be met, neither can comforts be bought without money.” Booth pleaded with her readers that “the measure of what we can do and ought to do, and yearn to do, and will break our hearts if we cannot do” depended “entirely” on how much money the ASA received.
Women’s service work at the front, she implied, required the empowerment of money, but money was simply a way to unleash the feminine power of the Sallies’ hearts. As Booth argued, the power which emanated from the Sallies tendencies (and which was characterized as mirroring the inclinations of good mothers) relied on the practice of “self-abandonment” for the sake of recipients of care. With such dulcet tones, the wartime campaign proved successful, raising almost two and a half million in funds by July of that year. More than that, Booth’s fundraising for such an unprecedented sum enabled her discovery of a new mechanism for expanding ASA’s institutional matrix, namely a “host of people who have loved us from the distance” but whose value for the ASA’s model of service would one day enable the Commander to raise “a much larger sum” befitting her “considerably” large future plans.

The day Booth predicted arrived in March 1919 when, in a War Cry article appropriately titled “Inaugurating a Campaign Which Will Revolutionize the Financial System of The Salvation Army,” the Commander launched another, much larger fundraising effort intended to translate the ASA’s “meed [sic.] of success in War Welfare Work” into an even more “extensive machinery for good.” The Home Service Fund set a goal of raising thirteen million dollars to benefit the ASA’s National Headquarters in New York City. Prior to the fund’s initiation, the ASA’s financial support came primarily from wealthy individuals, like John D. Rockefeller and John Wanamaker, and was supplemented by “local government contracts for social services” as well as the solicitations of Salvationists (men and women) standing on urban street corners, passing tambourines to collect small donations from working-class and poor constituencies. The 1919 Home Service Fund changed all of that. It consolidated ASA fundraising into a once-a-year effort which relied on sophisticated advertising strategies, including sloganeering (“A Man May Be Down, But He’s Never Out”), press releases, celebrity appearances, the circulation...
of “fact-filled booklets,” and the public announcement of donations made by high-profile business and political leaders. 72

Booth’s leadership of the Home Service Fund included her vigorous articulation of the argument that the changes being made with regard to her management of the ASA’s “machinery for good” included the more efficient mobilization of the same style of feminine service and sacrifice which had empowered the ASA’s wartime work. For instance, Booth wrote in announcing the fund, “The time comes now when we must, and shall, adopt new and more expedient methods. Our officers have finally and at last proved to the world that they are practical, capable and trustworthy, and that our brand of mercy and religion is for all men and of the plain, sensible homespun type that wears and succeeds.” 73 As Booth reasoned, the homey and practical service mission which ASA Sallies demonstrated at the European front needed to increase. The ASA’s officers needed to follow the Sallies model but, additionally, “serve more people, and in more ways,” “extend every branch of our Rescue Work,” and, as was the wont of the evangelical Christian service worker, “toil from dawn to darkness.” 74 The new and heavy burden of this responsibility meant that Booth’s Army could “no longer spare the time and energy for the solicitation of funds”; the Home Service Fund was designed to make the ASA more efficient through an annual public campaign that would stop the “everlasting passing of the tambourine, in season and out,” bringing an end to the “wastage of human energy in begging and collecting alms.” 75

As Booth emphasized in a June 1919 War Cry article, increased organizational efficiency would not alter the essentially feminine character of the ASA’s service work. Instead, it promised to ensure the ongoing impact of the organization’s service machine, styled to bring to
the public a womanly approach to caring for the poor. In emphasizing this point, Booth wrote of the burden “shoe-string” fundraising put upon women Salvationists in particular: “How our little women have stood the buffeting, the rebukes of the hustling crowds to collect nickels and dimes so that they should not turn the hungry away unfed.”

As Commander-in-Chief of the ASA, Booth appealed for money to be used to send the “martyrs of The Salvation Army,” namely the women who ran the ASA’s institutional network, to work among “the poor,” “the destitute,” and “the mothers of the slums.” ASA women engaged in this service, she wrote, “work eighteen hours a day. They soothe the pains of the sick. They minister to the dying. They are often the only mourners at the pauper’s grave. They are in the haunts of vice. They are deep in the filth, squalor and disease, rescuing—ever rescuing human souls, and healing broken hearts when we are sleeping, or doing some happy work.”

Feminine service and sacrifice, she argued, efficiently managed through the ASA’s new fundraising scheme promised to enable such dedicated women to continue to “carry their whiteness into the midnight of impurity, so that like Jesus they shall be close at hand.”

The new Christian machine Booth vowed to create using the public’s donated funds would efficiently serve “the lowly, the needy,” “the tempted, the wavering and the reckless.”

Yet it would do so without altering either the ASA’s principled mobilization of feminine service and sacrifice or the distinctions between classes which enabled middle-class, white Protestant women to continue to act as servants of the poor. As Booth wrote in a July 1919 War Cry article titled “How Can We Thank America?,” the Home Service Fund would still position Salvationists in “depots, subways, busses, entrances to public buildings of every nature” to ask for contributions from the “very poorest” who recognized the ASA as “their greatest friend.”

However, the newly designed scheme would also required a donations from a list of “friends” of
the Salvation Army which included “the men and women of worldwide standing and influence, a list too long to permit naming here, leaders of the world’s activities—social, educational, commercial, political—governors, statesmen, bankers, great merchants, lawyers and editors, men of achievement, men who speak and it is done.”

The Home Service Fund proposed a strategy for collecting donations which would re-inscribed hierarchies between the ASA’s set of “magnificent” friends of “matchless ability” and the “very poorest” members of society. Booth’s new plan thus envisioned a fundraising scheme which meant to embrace the efficient methodologies of modern social reform but without inspiring a modern, egalitarian re-organization of social class structures.

In all of this promised change (or maintaining of the same), the Home Service Fund relied on the executive ability of Evangeline Booth who vouched for her plan’s future success through her personal model of initiative characteristic to the new woman and a born again woman’s commitment to service and sacrifice on behalf of the poor. As she wrote in the July 1919 War Cry, “The immeasurably large program that is being planned to answer [the “stupendous call” for the ASA’s service] will tax our every resource, every power and every energy, and I cannot deny the fact that while formulating a table for extensively increased activities, I realize a keen anxiety as to our ability to measure up to the demand.”

For all that, Booth answered anxiety with a reiteration of firm confidence in her Army’s commitment to “faith,” “prayer,” and “their undying love for the people.” Booth gave the project her executive stamp of approval in a December 1919 War Cry: “That this system will be followed each year is my firm purpose, as it has the support of the people and the blessing of God, and I give it as my unwavering conviction that it will double the practical efficiency of The Army.” The Christian service machine she was creating, Booth argued, made the ASA’s approach to humanitarian
work not essentially different than it had been in the past, but larger. As she wrote in a May 1920 War Cry, the Home Service Fund helped make the ASA “so broad as to shelter all who are in need; that our heart be so enlarged as to beat in tenderest sympathy with all the suffering; that the stretch of our arms be broadened to press to our bosom all the sorrowing; that the tone of our voice be so clarified and impassioned that its message shall come with a vivifying hope to the innermost souls of men everywhere.” With these words, she indicated for readers her continuation of the ASA’s past example of using mother-love to impel its humanitarian institutions. As an executive manager, she would empower the organization to open its arms and “press to our bosom” all those in need. Thus Booth’s re-organization of the ASA’s fundraising systems illustrated how her feminine yet efficient executive management of the ASA would provide tenderness for the down-and-out and suffering on an enlarged scale.

In addition to the scheme for increasing fundraising efficiency, Booth’s post-World War I plan for re-tooling the ASA included a more modern system for the recruitment of Salvationist “cadets.” Just as service work required money, the ASA’s vast institutional matrix required the mobilization of fleets of highly motivated people ready to sacrifice comfort for the sake of serving others. Booth made this point explicit in her December 1919 review of the ASA’s year of progress: “New properties and superior equipment are springing up everywhere,” she wrote, “but the finest result is found in the freeing of a great force of good men and women for the doing of direct salvation work.” Booth cast the unleashing of such a “great force” as coming about in part through “a great campaign with the avowed purpose of gaining 100 per cent in several branches and phases of our work.” The One Hundred Per Cent campaign, launched in the fall of 1919, focused on recruiting candidates and cadets, “the fresh, new life flowing from
the body of the soldiership to that of officership.”

“Let this stream be staunched,” she warned, “and our active force deteriorates by inanition and atrophy.”

In the One Hundred Per Cent campaign, Booth posited her improved system for gaining new recruits as also a means for increasing the moral impact of conservative evangelical Protestant women’s service and sacrifice. She wrote in a May 1920 War Cry article exhorting participation in the campaign: “One hundred per cent increase in candidates, officers—this is our immediate extremity—nurses for our Hospitals, ministering angels for the slums, shepherdesses in our Children’s Homes, messengers of hope and salvation for the prisons; men and women who can sing, who can preach, who can nurse, who can persuade, who can organize, to fight back the evils of the nation.”

Christian devotion, in Booth’s framing of it, remained the work of men and women, but women occupied particular and particularly needed roles when it came to serving the poor: “nurses,” “ministering angels,” “shepherdesses.” As she wrote in an April 1921 War Cry, candidates motivated by what she characterized as feminine sacrifice would provide relief for those ASA officers already suffering on behalf of the needy, “abandoned to their task, toiling with feverish intensity, relieving pain and healing lifetime wounds, giving their nights as well as their days, sleeplessly laboring to the point of exhaustion, begrudging even the few hours in which they must rest, nerve-torn and weary, because there are not enough hands and hearts to do the work.”

Here Booth implied that those called to replace weary ASA officers in the field would be asked to give an even greater measure of sacrifice. Even as Booth praised the sacrificial instincts of ASA officers, she called for new recruits equally able to engage the work of Christian service, work which required “the vision of Christ,” “tender hands,” and “a warm-beating heart.” All of these traits Booth explicitly indicated as signs of Christian devotion reflected in her inclinations to care sacrificially for the suffering.
To her pleas for new recruits who would engage in this manner of sacrificial service, Booth added her personal example, her modeling of what she required of others as the ASA’s executive leader. For instance, in a June 1920 War Cry article titled, “Shall Ye Sit Here?,” Booth posited her calls for greater forces as stemming from her own painful experience of listening to “the cry” for “More Men” coming from “every captain of the company, every commander of a regiment, every general of the battle.” Her experience of hearing her officers’ pleas became yet another incentive added to her appeal: “This appalling need confronts me; its wailing cry rings in my heart, as the Commander-in-Chief of the forces of this field of warfare—as the bearer of its stupendous responsibilities, which press so heavily that I often think I shall be crushed beneath the weight!” With words like these, Booth reiterated her role as, on the one hand, an executive manager, the ultimate bearer of responsibilities, but also as a sort of ASA mother whose proper instinct was to answer her forces’ “wailing cry.” She responded to this “crushing” need with a motherly sacrifice which entailed enduring pain and willingly giving her own time and emotional energy in order to satisfy the pleas of others. Through her experience of personal suffering, then, Booth “would have lay claim to your manhood, to your better self, to your religion, to your sense of duty.” Her illustration of motherly endurance in this way added incentive for others to engage in the practices of sacrificial service. In a May 1920 War Cry article expressing her confidence that the ASA would meet its “one hundred per cent” goal, Booth added: “I was asked, ‘What ground have you for the expectation of such big things?’ I replied, ‘Our expectation is assurance, and our ground for it is the solid rock of faith.’ How could I doubt our reaching our goal when such phenomenal happenings are already on record?” In other words, Booth’s record as a faithful executive manager of the ASA’s Christian service schemes warranted future success. Added to that, her personal example of leading others into
service and sacrifice promised to combine with her executive skill to gather the forces needed for the ASA’s now expanded ventures.

Thus, through the Home Service Fund and the “One Hundred Per Cent” campaign, Booth acted as an executive manager able to mobilize feminine service and sacrifice toward the goal of operating a modern Christian service machine. In next section, I examine how Booth’s leadership in the humanitarian sphere illustrated an approach to modern social reform not only well-fitted to scientifically inspired organized private benevolence but also to state-based benevolence. Specifically, I analyze how Booth’s campaigning on behalf of prohibition legislation and her support of the emerging U.S. welfare state during the Great Depression indicated an attempt to combine the ASA’s value for conservative evangelical Protestant women’s service and sacrifice with the early-twentieth-century modern era’s value for statism.

Prohibition and the American Salvation Army’s Service to the U.S. Welfare State: Extending State Authority through Service and Sacrifice

As Stanley Carlson-Thies suggests, a number of private welfare institutions were significantly challenged as the result of a fundamental shift during the late 1920s and early 1930s in American public welfare systems away from “local sectarian, voluntary, and municipal programs” in favor of the construction of the U.S. welfare state. For all that, changes in public welfare systems were, to a substantial degree, precipitated by private religiously based groups, such as Frances Willard’s Women’s Christian Temperance Union, which defined public activism for causes such as women’s suffrage, temperance, and state aid to women and children as synonymous with a “private” charitable mission. In the early-twentieth-century, women
activists within a variety of institutions, both public and private, appeared collectively committed
to engaging social reform at all levels of government. As Linda Gordon argues, many prominent
women activists from this period viewed direct cooperation with the “state” (specifically
advocacy for and employment within the emerging U.S. welfare state) as a preferred means for
pursuing “social work,” participation in the burgeoning welfare state having been understood as
helping ensure the provision of welfare services for women and children.\(^{101}\)

According to Carlson-Thies, the institution of a “government-centered system of help”
and the consequent redefinition of welfare as “nondirective assistance” (or assistance which
distributed income to the needy without any attempt to change recipients’ “life direction”) did
not fully sideline religiously based service institutions such as the American Salvation Army.\(^{102}\)
In fact, with the early-1930s onset of the Great Depression and the implementation of FDR’s
New Deal in 1933, the ASA became one of several social service organizations which functioned
as an essential part of the nation’s “welfare delivery system,” whether that meant providing
services beyond what was offered through government welfare, pressing the government to make
changes to its welfare policies, or even becoming official agents of government-funded welfare
services.\(^{103}\)

As ASA Commander, Booth navigated this period’s seismic shift in American welfare
systems by framing the ASA as a modern social service institution which was in service to the
state, just as it was in service to the nation’s neediest populations. In fact, Booth’s
characterization of the ASA’s service to state emphasized the ways in which the organization’s
contribution of feminine service and sacrifice promised to help extend the state’s authority.
Through the arguments she made on behalf of the ASA’s role in aiding the state, Booth cast her
executive leadership of the organization as advancing statism and thus essential to the operation of state-based welfare systems.

In the 1920s and 30s, Booth’s active campaigning in support of newly enacted prohibition legislation provided an apt context for the Commander’s efforts to demonstrate how the ASA’s brand of sacrificial service might strengthen state authority. She did this by again emphasizing the value of her own approach to executive management of the ASA’s Christian service machine. Booth joined previous ASA Commanders in her conviction that prohibition was a vital part of the organization’s strategy for applying conservative evangelical Protestant values to the state. As Winston writes, in the early-twentieth-century, under Frederick and Emma Booth-Tucker’s leadership, the ASA established the problem of alcohol abuse among the needy as one of the organization’s primary concerns. The Booth-Tucker’s strategy for addressing the alcohol problem encompassed both zealous attempts to convert “drunkards in dives, saloons, and brothels” and advocacy for reform solutions which would address the apparent systemic causes of alcoholism among the poor, namely unemployment, shelter insecurity, and food scarcity. With the start of Evangeline Booth’s tenure in 1904, the “fight against alcohol” expanded even further. Booth, in keeping with Army traditions, avoided explicit political affiliations with parties or groups actively lobbying for the Eighteenth Amendment. All the same, through her writings and public speeches, she made her sympathies clear—a government-enforced ban on alcohol was akin to a victory in the ASA’s ongoing fight against “social evils.”

With the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919, Booth launched a concerted campaign to rally support for prohibition and ensure defeat for those already trying to overturn or
modify the law. Central to her campaign message was the notion that prohibition constituted both a modern advance and a needed moral influence. In a 1921 *War Cry* series titled, “Prohibition and Its Early Results,” she shaped this line of argument, stating that the Eighteenth Amendment had been championed by “America’s greatest men,” including “men of religious thought,” “men of scientific research,” “medical men,” and “men of ablest pen.” These men of learning marked the legislation as scientifically based and justified by modern standards of credibility. Yet prohibition, she went on, was also “a war of righteousness.” Of this war, she wrote: “But the blessing of God was upon it, the entreaties of mothers heralded it, and the tears of the children baptized it.” Booth used turns of phrase such as these to indicate that, when it came to the campaign for prohibition, scientism and the sentimental pleadings of women made on behalf of children had combined and were operating in harmony. Prohibition, as Booth spoke of it, was a war that used modern tools yet was impelled by women’s moral righteousness. On the other hand, the “friends of the liquor traffic,” she declared, had “neither heart nor head,” that is neither the sensibilities of scientific men nor the moral sentiments of devout women.

Prohibition afforded Booth with the opportunity to make an argument for the ASA’s model of feminine sacrificial service as consubstantial with the advance of the modern era and the modern state. For example, in another installment of the 1921 “Prohibition” series, she wrote: “We recognize that the task of banishing all intoxicating liquor from the land is a stupendous, a lengthy one; but the same strong forces of moral sentiment, scientific education, and business prudence which made outlaw of its sale and manufacture are equal to the undertaking.” “Moral sentiment,” implicitly defined as that brought to the project by Booth and the Salvation Army, stood on equal ground with the standard-setting fields of “scientific education” and “business prudence.” In fact, Booth argued, the whole scheme of ridding the
country of liquor would ultimately be guided by “the dynamics of divine inspiration.” With these words, Booth set her moral authority as the executive manager of the ASA as an indelible force which promised to determine the legislation’s success. The quality of moral authority required to sustain prohibition legislation against increasing attacks from pro-alcohol forces, she implied, was exemplified in her efforts to lead the ASA as a Christian service machine. For instance, in 1926, the Commander issued a passionate rejoinder to proposals in favor of the legalized sale of “light wines and beers” or the institution of an alcohol tax, reemphasizing the professional and moral credibility of the ASA’s witness to the manifest benefits of prohibition: “The Salvation Army in the United States has a force of over 4,500 officers, who spend their whole time in this work, having no other occupation in life than to devote themselves to the business of seeking the lost and aiding the neediest of our beloved country’s population.” Booth established the ASA’s “particular competence to witness” the “salutary effect” of prohibition on the fact that her forces remained “in intimate touch with the people,” in short on the basis of her organization’s strategy of providing personal care for and sacrificial service on behalf of “those where were formerly the victims of the drink traffic.”

Booth added to her arguments in support of both prohibition legislation and the ASA’s moral influence over the state the claim that the organization’s encouragement of feminine service and sacrifice proved a particularly important means for protecting the American, middle-class Christian home. Writing in the 1921 “Prohibition” series, for instance, she labeled the “forces arrayed against prohibition” as the “arch-enemy of civilization” whose “ruthless war upon the people destroys their homes” by promoting an “evil” responsible for “degrading manhood, defaming womanhood, and blighting little children,” as well as for digging “untimely graves” and destroying “more property than any other scourge that has swept our fair land.”
In this line of argument, Booth equated the forces opposed to prohibition with an impulse toward the destruction of older Victorian cultural values regarding manhood, womanhood, and the American home. She responded to such rhetorical opponents with a rallying cry for the convergence of conservative evangelical Protestant values and modern sensibilities. “I say to those who desire to escape the supertax by starting the saloon,” she wrote in a 1932 address before “1,000 temperance enthusiasts” which was reprinted in the *War Cry*, “that this is an era of education; it is an era of Christianity, of art, of science not barbarism. It is incredible that in our day of enlightenment any body of citizens should see to enrich itself at the price of the homes, the happiness of the mass of the people and of the flesh and blood of women and children.”

The nation’s “enlightenment,” she argued, hinged upon its commitment to protect women and children. This commitment, she argued, could only be realized alongside the continuance of Booth’s executive leadership, played out both in the ASA and within the American public more broadly defined. The preservation of modern civilization in America, she reasoned, remained tied to the preservation of the approach to “womanhood” she and the ASA embodied. If America wanted to remain an enlightened nation, she concluded, the style of moral influence she illustrated needed to be supported through the public advocacy on behalf of the Eighteenth Amendment.

In this line of reasoning, Booth posited her executive leadership of the ASA’s prohibition advocacy as strengthening the state and with it the American nation. The Eighteenth Amendment represented the state’s authority to protect America’s virtue and its modern civilization by prohibiting alcohol. By extension, Booth, as the law’s prominent defender, took up the role of guardian of national virtue. Her management of the ASA constituted an effort to protect the state’s legal authority as well as its ability to guarantee the continuance of established
cultural values. In her 1926 message to the U.S. Senate “Prohibition Committee,” for example, she urged state officials to “bless the law that has thrown this protection around the path of American womanhood, for higher than the probity and nobility of its womanhood our great nation can never rise.” With these words, Booth equated the maintenance of America’s standards of womanhood with the quality of the state’s authority. The latter relied on the former. Booth thus posited her leadership of the effort to support the Eighteenth Amendment as, ultimately, an effort to strengthen state authority. Her management of the ASA’s campaign on behalf of not just prohibition but also “American womanhood,” she claimed, promised to increase the influence of the state by perpetuating the sort of feminine moral influence she exemplified.

According to Booth’s framing of the argument, the results of the ASA’s campaign on behalf of the Eighteenth Amendment would include the strengthening of the state’s legal authority in tandem with the shoring up of the nation’s virtue. Writing in a June 1923 War Cry article titled, “Two Flags Glorious: An Independence Day Review,” she trumpeted the ASA’s willingness to fight for “the putting through of those measures for the outlawing of wrong and the upholding of right which, transcending anything in the nature of party politics, have been demanded by the enlightened conscience of the people and made possible by the provisions of the Constitution of the Union.” Prohibition, she claimed, was a manifestation of the American people’s “enlightened conscience,” the public’s collective ability to rise above individual interests for the sake of the nation. In addition to strengthening national virtue, Booth argued that the benefits of prohibition included the global increase of American power. For instance, writing in a January 1925 War Cry, Booth refused “to localize the effects of this legislation, or circumscribe them even with such broad confines as the Atlantic and Pacific seabords!”
Instead, she proclaimed, “America with the eye of the world upon her has accomplished this thing by the votes of free men and free women. She has erected a new Statue of Liberty with which to enlighten and lead the peoples of every land.”\textsuperscript{120} In short, the “high” moral standards entailed in prohibition promised to become the moral standard for the world. With this in mind, Booth queried, “From this advanced moral standard taken among the nations, shall America go back?”\textsuperscript{121} In asking this question, Booth indicated her leadership with regard to the prohibition campaign as simultaneously an effort to lead the state and increase its global power. Her exercise of influence as the executive manager of the ASA, in this sense, opened up avenues for additionally inciting a more robust vision for American nationalism.

Booth’s arguments in favor of prohibition failed with the 1933 repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. Nevertheless, the Commander’s quest to develop strategies for bringing the influence of feminine service and sacrifice to bear on the state continued. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, as public endorsement of the Eighteenth Amendment was crumbling, Booth persisted in her search for ways to employ the ASA’s service machine in service to the state. During this period, she envisioned the ASA as a strong partner to an American nation entering into a new era of growth and success. In a March 1929 \textit{War Cry} article, for example, she characterized her optimism as to the ASA’s future growth as derived not only from her past success in creating a “greater,” “purer,” and “more efficient” Salvation Army but also from her estimation of President Herbert Hoover.\textsuperscript{122} “I tell you,” Booth wrote, “the morning breaks, the clouds are passing from the skies, and I can say, with President Hoover safe in the White House and commander Evangeline Booth safe at home in New York, we are going to see such triumphs, such conquests, such victories in souls of the multitudes.”\textsuperscript{123} It is notable that Booth’s optimism as to the country’s future stemmed not just from her ability to vouch for the President but also
from her ongoing willingness to occupy the role of executive manager of the ASA. In any case, the Commander’s confidence in the U.S. government perhaps informed what Winston characterizes as the ASA’s slow response to “the developing economic crisis” taking shape in the late 1920s.\textsuperscript{124} Despite the market crash of 1929 and the rising tide of breadlines in the spring of 1930, the pages of the \textit{War Cry} took an “upbeat approach” to economic downturn and predicted an imminent “turnaround.”\textsuperscript{125} These predictions aside, by the fall of 1930, the ASA appeared to recognize the severity of the situation. From that point on, Booth’s Army stepped up its response, opening new institutions, initiating new fundraising appeals, advertising its various social services, and looking for ways to partner with the state in answering the looming crisis.

As Winston argues, the ASA’s response to the Great Depression tended to emphasize the need, on the one hand, to maintain “public order” and, on the other, to develop systems which would extend relief through work assignment rather than through “the dole.” According to Winston, Booth interpreted “free government aid to the need” (at least prior to the Federal Emergency Relief Act) as relief which “stripped men of their dignity and self-respect” and came with the additional risk of “rendering recipients more likely to riot and rebel.”\textsuperscript{126} Booth applied the ASA’s service institutions to the task of maintaining public order. In her penning of a “Manifesto” to ASA forces in October 1931, for example, Booth wrote, “The Salvation Army has built up a high reputation for efficient, self-sacrificing and courageous first aid to the wounded on the battlefield of life, and true to our traditions we shall again swing into action in the forthcoming crisis when the heart of the nation is being stirred and the faith of all men is being tried.”\textsuperscript{127} In other words, the economic crisis called for heartfelt compassion, just the sort entailed in the ASA’s approach to feminine service and sacrifice.
Booth announced that the ASA would take up its service role to the nation by accepting President Hoover’s invitation to join the “President’s Organization on Unemployment Relief,” the Commander having been moved to this decision by her witness of how the Depression had “subjected many millions of families in the United States and other countries to the acute privation and suffering of aggravated and prolonged unemployment.” Still, she reassured readers, her entrance into partnership with the state in response to economic crisis meant the taking up an “opportunity of service” to American families rather than a foray into politics and “controversy.” The role of the ASA, she argued, remained “to welcome and to fulfil [sic.] cheerfully and with noble consecration any and every duty that may be laid upon us by the President and the recognized leaders of the nation, who are associated with him.”

Booth posited her heartfelt and “noble” service (service which exemplified the quality of her moral influence) as simultaneously service to the state. The Commander’s embrace of “every duty” to the nation indicated her personal model of executive management as working to preserve state authority during a time of economic, political, and social turmoil.

Booth framed the ASA’s service to the state as akin to its long-held calling to serve humanity. In fact, in a May 1932 War Cry, Booth declared, “I have proved in my twenty-seven years of citizenship that the American is not behind in recognizing that unalterable fact that every man belongs to the human race, and owes a duty to mankind—the duty that takes the name and form of the law of humanity and unites us all in one great family.” The duty to humanity, she reasoned, went beyond politics, business interests, or “even religious groups.” “The law of humanity must ever reign supreme over every other claim,” she insisted. Booth argued for the ASA’s particular usefulness in upholding the law of humanity. “We have got this business of helping the needy down to almost scientific perfection,” she boasted. “The 10,000 operations of
The Salvation Army Social Service are the result of a great system, founded upon a most careful, persistent and intelligent study for over half a century of the problems that confront all government and civic authorities—problems presented by the lawless, the wicked, the unfortunate, and the most poor.”

In Booth’s line of argument, the ASA fulfilled its duty to humanity in large part by taking up the burdens of the state, namely study of and response to the sorts of social issues which undergirded persistent poverty and vice. In this sense, Booth framed the ASA’s commitment to the law of humanity as an effort to buttress established government and civic authorities.

As Commander of the ASA, Booth additionally suggested her own mission of service to the state as in the vein of the service to nation offered by government officials and business leaders. The nation, she proclaimed, recognized the contribution of those who worked “to build its bridges, to protect its forces, to cultivate its fields, to utilize its latest mechanical inventions, to make its cities thunder with enterprise, and to cause the mysteries of earth, and sky and air to write their meaning plainly before our eyes.”

To this list, she added her contribution as the ASA’s executive manager: “we feel more strongly still that that life which is of the greatest work within the four walls of a nation is man. The people are the greatest product of any nation.”

Booth’s role, then, was to manage the “production” of man, just as others built bridges, organized armies, farmed crops, created enterprise, and pursued scientific discoveries. Thus, in leading the ASA’s service mission to “Save the man, save the man!,” Booth helped lead the nation in its “greatest work.”

Booth’s service to the state took on concrete form with her August 1933 decision to sign on to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s National Recovery Act Agreement. The agreement
accompanied FERA, the first wave of the administration’s New Deal legislation, and required all private organizations wanting to distribute public welfare funds to become “public agents.” In a letter to FDR reprinted in a September 1933 *War Cry* and titled, “The Commander Assures President of Army’s Support to NRA Agreement,” Booth wrote to the President, “Upon the receipt of your stirring appeal to the Nation for cooperation in the National Recovery Act, I immediately gave instructions to the leading members of my staff to make a thorough study of the code as affecting the diversified activities of our two thousand religious and social service institutions throughout the United States.” The results of her “study of the code” enabled Booth to ensure the President that, “The Salvation Army is not only happy to conform to the provisions of the code, but that we shall do all within our power to further the interests of this worthy and ingenious national movement. We have signed the code and the blue eagle emblem will be displayed at each of our corps and institutions in the United States.” As Carlson-Thies suggests, decisions on the part of such private service organization leaders to advance the New Deal stratagems of the FDR Administration helped precipitated the “big bang” which led to the full institution of a government-centered welfare state.

Booth’s leadership of the ASA during the Great Depression, intent as it was in upholding conservative evangelical Protestant values, put feminine service and sacrifice in position to catalyze this process. Her response to the possibility of moral influence waning in the face of advancing statism was to posit her model of executive leadership as vital to maintaining national virtue, and national virtue as vital to increasing national strength. In the next section, I examine this point further, tracing how Booth’s pleadings in the late 1920s and early 30s for a national embrace of conservative evangelical Protestantism further tied the ASA’s brand of feminine service and sacrifice to the advance of American nationalism.
“Patriotism Is Not Enough”:
Mobilizing Service and Sacrifice to Advance American Nationalism

In the 1920s and early 1930s, Evangeline Booth adapted her rhetorical leadership of the ASA’s service network to suit the humanitarian sphere’s embrace of scientism and statism. She similarly adapted her interwar years evangelistic messages to fit the early-twentieth-century modern era. In this, Booth illustrated an ongoing trend within the ASA of strategically accommodating to aspects of public culture, even with regard to articulations of the organization’s evangelical mission. As Taiz notes, in the first twenty years of its history, the ASA stood its ground as a “working-class” religious organization which “rejected cultural refinement” and “defended its rowdy, boisterous, and physically expressive religious culture” as an important means of bringing salvation to the masses of men and women who, because of their depravity, had been excluded from “genteel” society. As the nineteenth century came to a close, ASA leaders began to shift their focus away from the founding generation’s model of religious zeal. This change came in part in order to facilitate fundraising from members of “polite society” inclined to support the Army’s social service work but not its “expressive religious culture,” but also in part to meet the social needs of an emerging “second generation” of middle-class Salvationists who were “less willing to accept outsider status” than were their working-class forebears. The result was a sharp departure from the “camp-meeting-style religion” of the past and the development in the early-twentieth-century of “a much more decorous religion” which embraced the “technologies of middle-class commercial culture.”

The ASA’s “social scheme,” as advanced by Emma and Frederick Booth-Tucker and later by Evangeline Booth, played a key role in encouraging adaptation of the organization’s
evangelistic message to early-twentieth-century modern trends. The Booth-Tucker’s, for example, discouraged “noisy, confrontational public performances” in an attempt to recast ASA spirituality as “orderly, dignified, devotional, and decorous,” and therefore worthy of the trust of wealthy donors.\textsuperscript{145} Evangeline Booth continued this shift by persisting in an effort to use her evangelistic messages to uphold a value middle-class culture. With a variety of evangelistic campaigns, Booth denounced aspects of modernism which, to use Winston’s terms, challenged “bedrock values of family, home, and religion,” even as she simultaneously employed “up-to-date methods” for “soul saving.”\textsuperscript{146} In one such campaign which used the slogan “Try Religion,” the ASA presented evangelistic invitations to skeptics to give religion (specifically conservative evangelical Protestantism) a chance when “all else has failed.”\textsuperscript{147} With its quasi-experimental, skeptic-friendly approach, “Try Religion” framed the ASA’s religious programming as based in the same scientific principles that provided the foundation for its popular social service institutions. Still, it also called the public to return to what Booth characterized as its traditional embrace of Christianity. Another campaign, called the “Golden Jubilee,” reached out to the public thorough a celebration of the Salvation Army’s fifty-year history in the United States. The campaign’s central attraction was the ASA’s newly opened twelve-story National Headquarters, a modern building complete with “broadcast facilities” but also abutted by a complex called “The Evangeline,” which featured a women’s “residence hotel” with “a gymnasium, a rooftop garden, and a swimming pool,” facilities suitable for uplifting women mired in a condition of plight to a more suitably middle-class environment.\textsuperscript{148} Through campaigns and institutional displays such as these, Booth demonstrated her intent to incorporate into the ASA’s modern evangelical witness ongoing efforts to uphold what she understood as “American womanhood.”\textsuperscript{149}
The evangelistic articles Booth published in the *War Cry* continued this trend. For example, in the 1926 Christmas edition of the *War Cry*, Booth queried, “It is not lack of bread. It is not the wrath of man against man, nation against nation.”

“The world’s chief need,” she answered, “is still to be found in the human heart.” The ASA’s emphasis on feminine service and sacrifice, she implied, was an old solution to the problems of the modern era, “a science that turns the bitter into sweet, the evil into good, and death into the messenger of life.” In the 1929 Christmas edition of the *War Cry*, she argued similarly for the application of the ASA’s particular “standard” of sacrificial service to the project of developing a modern American nation. In an article titled, “The Battle of the Standard,” she enumerated the ASA’s contributions to modern American society: “the mighty miracle of our Social Service, our numerous activities for the uplift of man, our Rescue Homes, our Hostelries, our labor Bureaus, our Orphanages and Nurseries and Fresh-Air Camps, our work of mercy and truth in the great prisons, our blessed public platforms.” All of these bore what Booth called the *standard* of the ASA—“sacrifice, purity of heart,” and “the Holy Ghost.” As important as she held that standard, Booth added: “Nothing that we can ever organize will equal the machinery of commerce, of education, of transport. In mere magnitude of organization we must be surpassed.” Still, she argued, even within ever-advancing modernity there remained a place for the ASA’s brand of heart-felt religiosity. Emphasizing that place, she exclaimed: “It is the Standard that makes ALL THE DIFFERENCE. Never has there been a conflict with the enemy of souls more desperate than the Holy War that we are waging today. It is the BATTLE OF THE STANDARD.” From her perspective as the executive manager of a Christian service institution, she attempted to illustrate her argument that the ASA’s standard of sacrifice and service proved vital to the success of the American standard.
In solidifying this point, Booth went on to compare the ASA’s standard to America’s national standard as symbolized in the nation’s flag: “But we know that there are vast regions where the Stars and Stripes do not fly. We know that, beyond the loftiest of our flagstuffs, there are heights it can never attain. We also know that loyalty to the Stars and Stripes, however deep, however enthusiastic, however perfect, does not meet the full demands made upon man by his Creator.” She announced a resounding conclusion as to the significance of obvious limits to the American standard’s influence: “Patriotism is not enough.” The nation’s standard made Americans into a “free people,” she wrote. “But is our freedom complete?” To that she answered no. What the nation lacked, she argued, the ASA could supply. The “Civil Government,” she wrote, held the potential to “strike off the external shackles which bind the spirits of men” but, in order to “sever the chains which hold their souls to the galling yoke their transgressions have made,” mere patriotism proved insufficient.\(^\text{156}\) Patriotism alone remained unable to “heal the sores,” “soothe the wounds human sorrows inflict,” or “lift the burden from our spirits that the wrongs of others impose.”\(^\text{157}\) Through this line of reasoning, Booth led readers to the conclusion that America’s advance as a modern nation required the inspiration of a nationalism infused with not only loyalty to the Stars and Stripes but with added component of the ASA’s standard of “purity of heart” and “sacrifice,” a standard exemplified in Booth’s leadership of an “everlasting warfare against every expression of impurity.”\(^\text{158}\) In this way, her evangelistic witness promoted a mission that entailed levying the moral influence toward the cause of upholding the stature of the American nation.

As the executive manager of the ASA, then, Booth took on a special role in the project of building the modern American nation, specifically the role of inspiring the public to hold fast to aspects of conservative evangelical Protestantism which could not be replaced by scientism and
statism. As she argued, the approach to feminine service and sacrifice she promoted must be understood as enhancing (not detracting from) such modern developments. As she wrote in an April 1930 War Cry, the nation’s students were abandoning what she understood as once firmly held Christian religious beliefs, such as “the old notion of sin,” “redemption,” “Hell,” or “pardon and penitence.”\textsuperscript{159} They were instead following the model of one “daughter of liberty” specially featured in one of Booth’s articles—a “quiet girl of thoughtful and beautiful countenance” who was “gracious, slender, dignified, a splendid product of our education in the United States” and whom the Commander saw stand up and declare, “in a voice so clear in its tone that it compelled attention,” that these ideas had been “quite abandoned” and that the new imperative was “to develop our true and best selves according to the lessons of the new science called psychology.”\textsuperscript{160} To such “ominous” signs, Booth responded: “Never shall we sign any armistice with Satan. Never shall we cease firing against his hosts. Of evil in all its forms we demand more than unconditional surrender. Our ultimatum is obliteration and we fight to enforce it.”\textsuperscript{161} The battle Booth intended to fight was one which would preserve America’s daughters of liberty (such as the exemplary daughter featured in the article) from the harmful side-effects of modern scientism. Such women needed to remain committed to the what she framed as a spiritual struggle against evil. What that meant, in her terms, was a commitment to maintain a standard for Christian service and sacrifice in the public that did not deny the advances of science but also did not use them as a means for rejecting conservative evangelical Protestant beliefs and values.

Thus Booth argued that her leadership of the ASA promised to improve American as a modern nation, supply it with benefits on par with those to be gained through scientism and statism. For instance, in the 1930 Christmas edition of the War Cry, in an article titled, “Patriotism Is Not Enough,” Booth catalogued the advances enjoyed in modern America: “better
schools, better houses, better food, better water, better amusements, better roads, better libraries, better gardens.” Americans, she observed, had flourished under the influence of early-twentieth-century modernity. They had “their homes, true and loving friends, devoted families, many admirable recreations which enrich human life. Excellent rations so far as they go.” All this, though, according to the Commander, was not “enough.” To supply the lack, America needed the ASA: “I question whether any agency anywhere, spiritual or social, has more largely contributed to the health, the happiness, the well-being of mankind. However squalid the home, we teach hygiene. However depraved the mind, we proclaim an abounding gospel of deliverance and salvation. However cheerless the street, we bring music and color and games and holiday.” The ASA, she reasoned, had mastered modernity’s best advances and applied them to its effort to preserve and strengthen the American home and to uplift sentiments within the American public. Even all of this, though, was still not enough. All of the conditions of health, youth, community, success, and happiness were not enough without “the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. He is enough,” she concluded. In other words, without the service and evangelical witness encouraged the ASA and its executive commander, the nation stood poised to fail.

To answer what she saw as this potential danger, Booth presented the ASA as strengthening the American home. In her view, the trajectory of America’s success as a nation success was tied to the persistence of the sorts of religious values the ASA promoted. Booth explained in the 1932 Christmas edition of the War Cry: “If there is depression, if millions are unemployed, if destitution falls like the shadow of a total eclipse on tens of thousands of homes, condemn not God. The blame is not with the almighty. The mind of man—that it is that has failed of wisdom.” If the “mind of man” occluded her call to service and sacrifice, she argued,
then the nation was vulnerable to crisis. On the other hand, the nation would return to its previous path of prosperity, complete with “plenteous” harvests, “inexhaustible” stores of oil, “quarries of stone,” and “mines of metal,” if it followed Booth’s example.  

Booth’s efforts to lead the nation to embrace her model of feminine service and sacrifice were premised on the promise that such a commitment would advance American nationalism. Writing in a June 1930 War Cry article titled, “The Fourth of July: A Trenchant Message for the Day,” Booth pleaded: “But let me, this Fourth of July, urge upon every reader of our War Cry to remember that self-government politically can only be a success as far as it is accompanied by self-government individually.” She called for individuals to make a “contribution” to the “life of the nation” that was “pure.” The quality of purity she promoted, and implicitly exemplified, held the potential to bring “virtue, social order, prosperity, elevation and improvement of human life.” “It is a force, a prodigious force,” she argued. “It revolutionizes the man.” As in the 1933 Christmas edition of the War Cry, she responded to the notion that religion was unnecessary to the preservation of social order and American prosperity: “No other influence, whether of education, finances, art, philosophy, or environment, can approach the high triumphs over the breaks and weaknesses of human nature that are recorded in the red lettering of the Blood of the Lamb.” The standard she sought to apply to the nation not only “purifies the heart,” she argued, it also undergirded “the very essence of civilization.” It inspired “the highest sentiment,” created “tenderness of feeling; the gentleness that makes great,” and gave “refinement and courtesy to behavior and culture to the most uncouth.” In other words, Booth posited her approach to modern social reform as crafting the American nation into a persistent “civilization,” one that would quell the uncertain impulses of “the most uncouth.” With this,
she asserted that her leadership of the ASA would expand American nationalism through a style of feminine service designed to uphold the standards of white, middle-class culture.

Booth’s late 1920s and early 30s efforts to promote the national embrace of conservative evangelical Protestantism simultaneously tied her example of feminine service and sacrifice to the advance of a modern American nation. Her executive management of the ASA thus signaled the ASA’s mission of service to humanity as simultaneously service to the advance of American nationalism.

Conclusion

A November 1934 War Cry reprinted Booth’s final farewell address to the ASA and to the American public. In an article titled “March On!,” Booth marked the end of her tenure as ASA Commander by reiterating the focused goal of her thirty years of leadership: “We make human forces to serve spiritual ideals.” The contribution she made to the pursuit of this goal, she argued, was clear: “I think I may say that it is now recognized by all governments that The Salvation Army under all circumstances is a necessity, and could not be removed without serious loss to the moral, social, and religious life of the country.” To this general admonition she added a specific exhortation to the United states, that the nation “under the direction of our honored President, the arm of our great Republic, so richly privileged among the nations of the world, may go forth in ever-increasing strength, in support of all good, and strike with greater force against all evil, protecting from the inroads of destructive and seductive foes the peoples for whom so proudly waves the Stars and Stripes.” With her exit, Booth exhorted “the eye of the Government” to “be so keen that it will pierce the fog of greed and selfishness, and guide
aright the Ship of State.” In her concluding rallying cry, Booth called out the failure of various “isms” to bring satisfaction and peace—“nationalism, communism, modernism, materialism.” What was required was for the “nations of the earth” to “Try Religion.” In all of this, Booth carried on in her role as the executive manager of not only the ASA’s institutional network of Christian service but also of the nation’s virtue.

Booth’s rhetorical trumpeting of the ASA’s model of feminine service and sacrifice showed the Commander’s dual embrace of modern standards of scientific efficiency and government-centered organization and her role as director of the “standard” of national greatness. In this she demonstrated her executive leadership as potentially shaping the American humanitarian sphere, despite the fact that the grounds for the sort of influence she modeled were dramatically shifting. Executive management of the sort Booth demonstrated need not, and must not, be abandoned, she pleaded, for it provided the best means for protecting against the several “destructive and seductive foes” which threatened national virtue. Even so, Booth’s promotion of feminine service and sacrifice on behalf of the nation posited the ASA as adapting just as easily to the refrains of nationalism as it did to calls for increased efficiency under the weight the era’s increased social and economic demands. Her leadership thus illustrated the troubling (and seemingly entrenched) intersection between some of her early-twentieth-century conservative evangelical Protestant values and the ballyhooing of American nationalism. The next chapter turns to the further examination of this sort of intersection illustrated in a different case, that of Aimee Semple McPherson’s leadership framed as “sisterly” Christian service.

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2 Troutt, 164.
Winston, 150.

Winston, 150.

Winston, 143-145.


Wajcman, 44.

Winston, 20.

Winston, 22. As Winston notes, William Booth put his proposal for the Salvation Army’s “social scheme” into print in 1890 with the publication of In Darkest England and the Way Out, a text which proposed creating urban settlements that would employ the poor in “salvage stations,” then move newly-trained workers to farming colonies, both in England and overseas (60). As Lillian Taiz adds, In Darkest England attempted to combine the Army’s missionary values with modern assumptions as to the social causes of poverty. It refuted the claims of institutions like the Charity Organizing Society (COS) which in the 1890s continued to insist that poverty was caused primarily by morally deficient individuals. Booth argued instead that society was responsible for creating conditions which caused some to “slide to perdition.” Booth’s text rejected the separation of the so-called “deserving poor” from the undeserving poor, arguing instead that salvation, whether material or spiritual, should be “full, free, and universal” for anyone willing to work and to embrace the evangelical Christian gospel. (Taiz, 107.)

Winston, 23.

Winston, 23.

As Winston writes, William Booth’s In Darkest England arguably constituted one such attempt to garner public affection. For this, Booth won praise from those who admired his efforts to create a social system which combined “religious compassion with practical relief efforts tied to work” (Winston, 61). Still, In Darkest England also incited criticism from some who saw in Booth’s work the desire to out-compete other charitable institutions, thus promoting his particular religious system by indiscriminately handing out of relief to the poor. As Winston suggests, there appears to be some truth to this critique. Booth’s “social scheme,” on the one hand, reflected the Salvation Army’s postmillennial theological convictions, but, on the other, indicated a concerted effort to buoy the organization’s already “flagging evangelical efforts” (Winston, 61).

Winston, 22. Winston notes that Commissioner George Scott Railton, the leader of the first group of Salvationists to set foot in the U.S. in 1880, became an even stronger advocate for “women’s right to preach” than Army co-founder Catherine Booth (10, 22). He told the “Army Mother,” upon returning from his first expedition to the U.S., “Those English may stick to their men as hard as they like, but I am certain it is the women who are going to burst up the world, especially the American women” (Winston, 22).
Booth’s class sympathies are, perhaps, not surprising given her experiences, both as a child and as an adult, socializing with the “upper-class circles” frequently targeted by Salvation Army fundraising campaigns. In addition, despite the working-class backgrounds of her parents, Booth, as ASA Commander, made her home in the wealthy New York suburban town of Hartsdale, in this sense signaling an affinity with the “rich” which belied her frequent characterizations of the ASA as an organization working “among” the poor (Winston, 149-50).
As Taiz writes, the Home Service Fund secured funding for social programs directed primarily through the ASA’s National Headquarters in New York City, but it did not make any effort to meet the financial needs of local corps which constituted “the heart of the Army’s purely religious mission” (133). Local corps continued to face significant “membership and money problems” even after the institution of the Home Service Fund (Taiz, 133). In this sense, Booth’s restructuring of ASA fundraising reflected 1920s trends toward the development of community chests whose value for efficiency similarly weakened the influence of locally-based, individually-branded agencies in favor of an expanded, centralized bureaucracy.

Booth makes a link between the multiple publicity tactics employed in the first Home Service Fund and the upholding of religious women’s influence in her description of a campaign poster created by Frederick Duncan. The poster featured “a blue-bonnet lassie” holding a child in “the folds of her voluminous red cloak” while at her feet appeared “the faces of the needy, representatives of a wide spectrum of humanity” (Winston, 222). The poster announced the campaign’s slogan, “A Man May Be Down, But He’s Never Out,” a phrase which came to define ASA social work throughout the 1920s and 30s.


Evangeline Booth, “What the $13,000,000 Will Be Used For,” War Cry, June 14, 1919, 8.
In the early twentieth century, cadets were required to complete a training course, frequently through one of the ASA’s many training garrisons or through one of its two training colleges (the Eastern in New York City, or the Western in Chicago). As Taiz notes, training courses included topics such as review of Salvation Army doctrine and regulations, how to compose and deliver sermons, “corps bookkeeping,” Salvation Army literature, and other general education subjects (like math, reading, and spelling), as required to ensure cadets’ literacy. After a probationary period, cadets were promoted to the level of soldier. Soldiers could be further promoted to rank of officer, these positions named according to the terminology of military hierarchy. (Taiz, 212-13).

Booth drew the line at organized lobbying efforts but apparently not at attempting to personally influence U.S. Presidents. In a March 1927 War Cry article, Booth detailed her “visit to the White House,” a visit which she claimed assured her that “both the President and Mrs. Coolidge experienced a more than human joy over the material well-being which prohibition has brought.” (Evangeline Booth, “My Visit to the White House,” War Cry, March 19, 1927, 9.) Similarly, a February 1931 War Cry featured a reprinting of “a message from the Commander” which assured President Hoover of the ASA’s “enthusiastic support in your courageous decision to uphold the Constitution of the United States and the dignity of our laws by a resolute determination to enforce the Eighteenth Amendment.” (Evangeline Booth, “A Better World: Not an Underworld,” War Cry, February 7, 1931, 8.)
In this section, I cite several of Evangeline Booth’s *War Cry* articles on the subject of prohibition and the Eighteenth Amendment. Booth also circulated her prohibition writings (most of which were reprinted from her published *War Cry* articles) in pamphlet form, the titles of which include: “The Best Witness Testifies,” “Prohibition and Its Early Results,” “The Salvation Army Appraises Prohibition,” and “Shall America Go Back?.” Additionally, in 1932 Booth authored a longer pamphlet titled, “To Be or Not To Be,” a full exposition of the ASA’s arguments against repeal enhanced by the extended “testimonies” of ASA field officers offering their “witness” to prohibition’s positive effects.


Booth, “Prohibition,” August 27, 1921, 9.


Booth, “Prohibition,” September 10, 1921, 8.

Booth, “Prohibition,” September 10, 1921, 8.

Evangeline Booth, “An Answer to the Challenge: Message to the Senate Prohibition Committee,” *War Cry*, July 3, 1926, 8. This article reprinted Booth’s written statement before the Senate Sub-Committee of the Committee on Judiciary. The statement was read on Booth’s behalf by one of her officers.


Booth, “Prohibition,” September 10, 1921, 8.


Booth, “Commander’s Address,” 5. Booth’s address included an update on her recent yet unsuccessful attempt to lobby for the position of Salvation Army General upon the death of her brother Bramwell Booth. In vying for the position, the Commander had entered into a weeks-long conflict which required her to spend an extensive period residing in London. Booth declared the end of the controversy as an “emancipation of The Salvation Army from the fetters that threatened the growth of our glorious work.” (“Commander’s Address,” 9.) As Winston writes, however, Booth’s public expressions of happiness on her return to the position of ASA Commander were offset by private “complaining” to her officers at being “soundly defeated” in her bid for the Salvation Army Generalship. (Winston, 233.)

Winston, 235.

Winston, 235.

Winston, 236.


Carlson-Thies, 272.


Booth, “The Commander Assures,” 9. As David Kennedy writes, FDR kicked off the “Blue Eagle campaign” in July 1933 in order to invoke “the wartime ideal of cooperation in a time of crisis” (183). Display of the symbol by a welfare agency purported to signal coordination with the government’s initiatives, conformity to government standards and policies, and the distribution of government funds. Evangeline Booth’s energetic embrace of the blue eagle notwithstanding, not all leaders of religious charitable organizations accepted the campaign without skepticism. Analysis of the differences indicated by Evangeline Booth’s, Aimee Semple McPherson’s, and Dorothy Day’s respective responses to the blue eagle in particular and FDR’s New Deal initiatives in general will be examined at greater length in the concluding chapter of this dissertation. (David Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1999], 183-84.)

Carlson-Thies, 272.

Taiz, 143.

Taiz, 144.

Taiz, 144.

Taiz, 145, 149.

Winston, 230.

Winston, 231-32. “Try Religion” was staged in 1932 and designed to exhort a suffering American public to turn (and in some cases return) to Christian churches for hope and help.


Winston, 233-34.

Taiz indicates this decades-long pattern of shifting emphasis away from demonstrative, bold evangelism and toward an evangelistic strategy oriented around social service provision as creating an important distinction between the ASA and the International Salvation Army headquartered in London. She argues that England’s establishment of a robust social welfare state in the early-twentieth-century gave Salvation Army General Bramwell Booth the liberty to de-emphasize the Army’s social service work in that country and “re-emphasize its working-class religious and temperance role” (137). Evangeline Booth followed the opposite of this pattern in her concurrent tenure as ASA Commander. The Salvation Army’s distant relationship to the British welfare state can thus be contrasted to the ASA’s established partnership with the American semi-welfare state. As Taiz suggests, the ASA’s early-twentieth-century evangelistic mission was thus, to some extent, restricted given the organization’s need to gain public and state support for its role as a respected social service provider (137). This distinction proves an important lens through which to examine Evangeline Booth’s incorporation into her evangelistic messages of adaptations not only to modern scientism but also to modern statism.

Evangeline Booth, “Thou Shalt Call His Name Jesus,” *War Cry*, December 1926, 16.
Booth, “Thou Shalt,” 16.

Booth, “Thou Shalt,” 16.


Evangeline Booth, “The Eternal Manifestation,” War Cry, April 19, 1930, 8.


Booth, “Patriotism,” 12.

Booth, “Patriotism,” 12.

Booth, “Patriotism,” 12.


Booth, “Thine Is the Glory,” 11.


Evangeline Booth, “March On!,” 5. The article was subtitled, “The Stirring, Brilliant Farewell Address Delivered at the National Tribute of Farewell Meeting in new York City.” Booth left her position as ASA Commander at the end of 1934 in order to take on the role of “Chief Shepherd of our world-embracing flock,” or, in other words, the Salvation Army Generalship. (Booth, “March On!,” 5.) Booth’s move back to London, the home of her youth, constituted the fulfillment of her long-held ambition to become the central leader of the international organization founded by her father.

Evangeline Booth, “March On!,” 5.

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Evangeline Booth, “March On!,” 5.
CHAPTER 3:
AIMEE SEMPLE MCPHERSON AND THE CALL FOR “SISTERLY” SERVICE

Los Angeles in the 1920s and 30s was a city teeming with intriguing sites for tourists and for recently arrived immigrants. According to David Clark, preeminent among these attractions was Evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson—her performances onstage at the Angelus Temple were considered a L.A. sightseeing “must.”¹ McPherson brought to the Los Angeles scene an alluring Pentecostalism which blended the familiar elements of old time revival crusades (including Holy Spirit baptism, speaking in tongues, emotional preaching, invitations to divine healing, and announcement of the imminent arrival of Christ) with a spectacular California style. At the Angelus Temple, “old time religion” was showcased by a modern woman with “dyed bobbed hair and stylish clothes.”² McPherson’s “show” proved a compelling site for Californians less interested in “hellfire” religion and doctrinal distinctions than in “positive-thinking” and an appealing invitation to Christian faith made by a lady preacher fashionably bedecked in white.³ Perhaps most significant to McPherson’s postwar public acclaim was her ability to blend old and new, or Victorian cultural sensibilities and the modern era’s “new woman.” Through stylistic innovations suitable to her California context, McPherson, who was also affectionately known as “Everybody’s Sister,” framed the ministry she founded as one in line with modern trends. Yet she simultaneously reworking those trends to incorporate some
older Victorian ideals, in particular the notion that middle-class Protestant women held special authority as instigators of social influence.

McPherson’s ministry took a scandalous turn, however, in 1926, when the Lady Evangelist faced criminal charges and public discredit in light of claims that she had fabricated her own kidnapping, as it was rumored, in order to pursue an illicit romantic affair. Nevertheless, in 1927, after successfully warding off her legal troubles, McPherson staged a comeback that once again saw her incorporating old and new into her strategy for ministry success. That year she launched a “triumphant speaking tour,” incorporated the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel as a denomination, and founded the Temple commissary, an institution which aimed to organize and institutionalize the ICFG’s charitable ministries. As McPherson implied in a June 1929 edition of The Bridal Call, the commissary in particular aimed to put white, middle-class Protestant women to work providing food, first aid, and “practical help, with comfort, cheer, and prayers” for Californians “white or black, Catholic or Protestant, Jew or Gentile, it matters not.” To staff the Temple commissary, McPherson commissioned the Foursquare City Sisters, a group of the ICFG’s women members who sported nurses’ white uniforms and blue capes and followed their leader “into the homes of the poor” in order to “establish personal connections and thereby open the door for real missionary and evangelistic work.” The City Sisters represented, in some ways, a partial retreat from McPherson’s earlier enthusiastic embrace of the new woman. These volunteers, she wrote, were former “society women” who were once devoted to “bridge and jazz” but had rejected “their former empty, vapid life” in order to dedicate “their time and beautiful cars to do the work of alleviating suffering.” McPherson’s marshalling of the City Sisters to do charity work helped recast her post-kidnapping scandal image, causing her to emerge from the crisis as, to use
Matthew Sutton’s terms, “simultaneously the fashionable socialite and the social welfare activist.” Through her promotion of the City Sisters’ work at the commissary, McPherson invented a new form of the new woman, one still driven by passion, just not passion for the secular pleasures of games, music, and “vapid” socializing.

As McPherson’s leadership of the Temple commissary and the City Sisters suggests, part of her late-1920s success stemmed from an ability to draw on conservative Protestant beliefs and values even as she welcomed aspects of early-twentieth-century modernity. McPherson’s incorporation of the City Sisters into her large-scale, organized Christian charity emphasized values associated with the new woman, especially the notion that “female passion” ought to be viewed as beneficial rather than dangerous, even as it affirmed the social contributions made by middle-class, Protestant women to the humanitarian sphere. In fact, McPherson’s 1920s and 30s charitable endeavors articulated a particular form of feminine passion—namely “sisterly” passion—as providing the fuel required to advance modern social reform. In her charity rhetoric from this period, McPherson posited her organization’s model of sisterly service as enabling the sorts of expansions to benevolence systems needed in order to realize modernity’s lofty humanitarian aims. Additionally, McPherson put forth her and her followers’ example of passionate service as a driving force necessary for forwarding not just private but also state-based efforts to enact modern social reform. She carried this theme into the late-1930s, advocating for her version of sisterly service as the best means for reforming a nation wrecked by the Great Depression.

In all of this, McPherson responded to what Pascoe calls the early-twentieth-century development of a “modern system of gender” which saw the diminishment of female moral
authority as an authoritative ideological basis for women’s participation in the humanitarian sphere. She answered this era’s challenges as to the relevance of some women leaders’ social influence with the invention of a new, if unique, basis for religious women’s participation in the humanitarian sphere. McPherson posited the idea that sisterly passion of the sort she modeled at encouraged through the ICFG’s ministries remained essential to the ongoing development of modern social reform. The way she chose to justify her leadership in the humanitarian sphere drew on many bedrock values entailed in conservative Protestantism, specifically an emphasis on the importance of middle-class, Protestant women’s service to society’s least members. Yet it also illustrated her example of sisterly service as well suited to meet modern standards—capable of both forwarding scientism within social reform contexts and strengthening state-based benevolence systems.

In the mid- to late-1930s, McPherson went further to articulate sisterly service as not only in line with modern social reform but also with nationalistic sentiments emerging during the period which expressed the intent to protect and preserve white, middle-class culture from challenges brought by increased rates of immigration and increasing calls for radical economic and social equality across racial and ethnic groups. In this sense, her advocacy for a new way of Christian service in the mode of the new woman provided not only means for promoting a viable approach to modern social reform but also tools for inspiring Americanism. Her invention of a new model of leadership in the humanitarian sphere thus took shape as a form of social influence which reinforced social inequalities even as it proposed strategies for relieving the nation’s social and economic ills.
This chapter analyzes McPherson’s rhetorical leadership of the ICFG, the Temple commissary, and the City Sisters as based in a vision for promoting a unique form of Christian service that constituted a new approach to early-twentieth-century humanitarianism. The first section begins this analysis by indicating how McPherson’s particular attention to Christian charity developed as the Pentecostal ministry she founded gained in complexity and popularity during the 1910s and 20s. The following three sections examine McPherson’s invention of a unique humanitarian rhetoric: first, through her 1920s founding of the Temple commissary and the City Sisters, second, through her late-1920s and 30s efforts to adapt the ICFG’s charitable ministries to the era’s rapidly expanding state-based benevolence systems, and, third, through, through her mid- to late-1930s efforts to apply her version of Pentecostal social reform to a nation weighed down by the Great Depression. In all of this, I show how McPherson in some sense posited her approach to Christian service as a means for realizing the modern ideals of a humanitarianism based in equality and inclusion, but in another important sense justified her moral authority in a way which remained antithetical to the core aspirations of equality and universal care which characterized the 1920s and 30s modern era.

“Sister Aimee”: From Lady Evangelist to Founder of the Angelus Temple

Passion, religious and otherwise, deeply shaped Aimee Semple McPherson’s life from its very beginning. Born in October 1890 in Ingersoll, Canada to James and Minnie Kennedy, Aimee spent her early years exposed to the festive religiosity of her Methodist father and the zealous social and spiritual campaigning of her Salvationist mother. In her younger years, social frivolity and “worldly passions” seemed to interest Aimee far more than religious devotion.
All of that changed, however, in December 1907 when she met Robert Semple, a young preacher with an “Irish lilt” which attracted Aimee to an itinerate Pentecostal mission staging a revival in Ingersoll.\textsuperscript{11}

Semple, who was an associate of Chicago-based Pentecostal leader William Durham, brought to Aimee’s home town a dynamic new religious movement which demonstrated “Spirit-filled” preaching, the kind meant to revive interest in conservative Protestant spirituality, and invited all believers to receive a spiritual “anointing to preach, prophesy, testify, or sing.”\textsuperscript{12} Over the course of only a few days, Aimee became “sparked” by Semple’s preaching and by her experiences at the mission, even to the point of resisting the initial objections of Minnie Kennedy who saw Pentecostalism as drawing her daughter into spiritual exuberances, such as speaking in “strange tongues” and shaking, shouting, and laughing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, all behaviors which the Salvation Army considered inappropriate for would-be revivalists.\textsuperscript{13} Aimee’s “spark” extended to Robert as well, and they were married in August 1908. Two years later, they were together inspired to travel to China to join a Pentecostal mission.\textsuperscript{14} The move, however, proved disastrous. Robert Semple was stricken with malaria and died within a few months of the couple’s arrival, leaving Aimee alone with newborn daughter Roberta.\textsuperscript{15}

In the winter of 1910, an emotionally and physically weakened Aimee Semple returned to the U.S. and moved in with her mother who had relocated to a New York City apartment in close proximity to the Salvation Army’s Manhattan headquarters. In 1911, a somewhat recovered Aimee, cheered by the “lights of Broadway,” met and married Harold McPherson.\textsuperscript{16} The couple welcomed son Rolf in 1913. However, the domestic duties of marriage and motherhood failed to satisfy Aimee’s cravings for the kind of all-encompassing life of ministry she had experienced in
her first marriage. She longed for a renewal of the “dedication to God and God’s service” she first embraced in response to Semple’s preaching. In 1915, McPherson decided to act on her desires, with Harold’s reluctant support. That year, with a tent and a “Gospel Car,” she traveled the country announcing the message that “Jesus saves” and that Christians must “prepare to meet your God.” Marriage to Harold would not sustain McPherson’s drive to become a Pentecostal revivalist, but that drive would propel the “lady evangelist” onto the national stage.

McPherson’s travelling Gospel Car and tent revivals drew eager crowds, and, by the late 1910s, her campaign had garnered nation-wide recognition. McPherson joined a chorus of Pentecostal leaders traversing the country in order to fan the flames of revival. In fact, in 1919 she was given official “credentials” as an “evangelist” by the Assemblies of God, a newly established but rapidly growing Pentecostal denomination happy to count “Sister Aimee” as one of their own. McPherson’s ministry ran in line with what Matthew Sutton calls “the big house of fundamentalism,” a movement which took shape in the late 1910s and 20s and encompassed a myriad of conservative Protestant groups expressing a common concern regarding the spread of theological doctrines associated with philosophical modernism. McPherson shared with fundamentalists the conviction, brought into sharp relief by the U.S.’s entry into war in Europe, that human civilization was headed toward inevitable destruction but that, paradoxically, there was hope for saving civilization through, to use George Marsden’s words, “a return to Christian principles.”

With the first publication of The Bridal Call in 1917, McPherson began to set up a distinct focal point for her ministry, one which marked her gender as distinguishing her style of leadership from that of her Pentecostal and fundamentalist peers. The theological dimension of
that focal point, as Edith Blumhofer explains, stemmed from McPherson’s efforts define her ministry as “heralding the imminent arrival of Christ, the bridegroom of the church.”

By using *Bridal Call* as her magazine’s title, McPherson framed the movement she led as living out a New Testament parable which told the story of ten virgins waiting for the coming of a bridegroom. In this sense, McPherson posited her version of revivalism as preparing the Christian church for Jesus’ second coming just as a bride is prepared for her wedding. Into this marital imagery, she wrote and preached an explicit emphasis on passion and emotion. In a May 1918 *Bridal Call*, for instance, she stridently rebuked the “learned divine,” the educated (ostensibly) male preacher who advocated “no tears, these are undignified, no shouting, this is excitement.”

What civilization needed, she proclaimed, was not cold warnings against “this new religion where people shout and dance and sing” but encouragement to embrace such forms of “old time religion.”

McPherson enhanced her ministry’s distinctiveness with an additional emphasis on ecumenicalism in a deliberate turn away from what Sutton calls “the separatist direction of pentecostalism” and toward a strategic focus on using Pentecostal religious values to reform traditional denominations from the “inside out.” She described this aspect of her approach as challenging the “cold, backslidden, worldly formality” which characterized both modernist Christians and fundamentalists who rejected the Biblical authenticity and the reforming potentiality of “the gifts of the Holy Spirit.”

Yet she also proposed to moderate the enthusiasms of Pentecostals, their “wildness, hysteria, screaming, or unseemly manifestation” replaced by “deep, holy, somber, godly, reverent, prayerful exaltation of the gentle Christ.”

McPherson thus proposed a Pentecostal mission which was ecumenical and which aspired to bring together “myriad streams” of Christian devotees, including, “Methodists, Baptists, the
Salvation Army, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Adventists, Quakers, and Roman Catholics.” As McPherson put it, the “one great stream” created out of her version of Pentecostal ecumenicalism promised to encourage not only revival within the church but also extensive reform of basic social institutions. Such a collection of Christians similarly inspired by the Holy Spirit, she argued, held the potential to generate not only reverent emotionality but also social influence, genuine passion for the Christian faith harnessed and directed in such a way that it might continue to appeal to middle-class society.

In the early-1920s, McPherson began to build an institutional structure designed to promote the moderate, inclusive, “happy” gospel which characterized her Pentecostal ministry. The institutional network McPherson created to spread her version of conservative Protestant spirituality averred her burgeoning movement’s modern leanings as well as the Lady Evangelist’s ongoing interest in promoting conservative Protestant women as a social influencers. According to Blumhofer, openness to “new institutions” and “innovative approaches” were the qualities that first attracted McPherson to Los Angeles, the eventual home-base for her expanding ministry endeavors. Echo Park, the neighborhood which she chose as the location of the Angelus Temple, blended Californian innovation and hominess, or, as Blumhofer put it, “old-fashioned” family charm and Hollywood’s “modern” trappings. The Angelus Temple, completed in 1923, was a “modern structure” which allowed McPherson to “make church-going an entertainment instead of a mere habit.” The Temple’s extensive structure also included elements conducive to training followers in the ways of conservative Protestantism, such as a educational institutes which would provide “hands-on” instruction for evangelists and missionaries. Additionally in 1923, McPherson joined the Chamber of Commerce and the Los Angeles Ministerial Association, further cementing her role as the head
of a major Los Angeles institution. With this move and with her vision for propagating “branch churches” in surrounding communities, McPherson’s once itinerate ministry increasingly took shape as a modern institution, albeit one designed to promote her particularly gendered version of “old time religion.”

McPherson put her vision for mobilizing passionate service into action through her persistent efforts to incorporate elements of social reform into the ICFG’s ever-expanding institutional network. The ecumenical, invitational, emotional gospel she preached helped her to posit the Angelus Temple’s mission as including the work of social improvement. McPherson’s experiences with the Salvation Army in her childhood had exposed her to the possibilities of religiously motivated social reform. As her Los Angeles based ministry began to develop, she created an approach to social reform which started with the extension of sympathy and hospitality to those among her devoted followers who were rejected by society. As Sutton notes, McPherson’s hospitality ministry took special care when it came to extending sympathy to unwed mothers. With writings such as “Practical Christianity,” first published in The Bridal Call in August 1924, McPherson justified her efforts, arguing that the “whole gospel” as she preached it included acting in ways that were “practical for the poor.” She exhorted her followers to become “wide-awake folk” who used every “wonderful invention” (radio, the automobile, the telephone, etc.) to extend “practical Christianity throughout the earth.” Additionally, McPherson lent her growing public influence to Los Angeles-based campaigns against various forms of “vice.” Her dual role as public advocate and leader of the ICFG’s charitable efforts situated her within the tradition of “Protestant volunteerism, civic housekeeping, and community building,” in short a cultural tradition which emphasized the social contributions made by Protestant women. Still, she departed from the older model of
female moral authority undergirded by Victorian cultural values to promote a sort of passionate Christian service more akin to the ways of the new woman.

The advance of McPherson’s modern but passionately driven institutional network hit an obstacle in 1926, her public image thrown into crisis by wide-spread skepticism and even criminal charges related to her story of having been kidnapped. The charges were dropped in January 1927. To celebrate, McPherson set out on an eighty-day national “vindication tour.” That year she did more than restore her reputation. She also reignited her drive to create a modern ministry which would institutionalize her unique brand of “old time religion.” Toward this end, she incorporated the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel as a denomination and founded the Temple commissary, an institution designed to modernize her approach to “social work.”

McPherson’s 1927 return further established her ministry as a modern, institutionalized version of conservative Protestant Christianity, averring Sutton’s claim that, while she “rejected the theological and philosophical ideas associated with modernity,” McPherson also “appropriated” aspects of “modern life.” In this sense, she established her role as a leader in the humanitarian sphere by advancing an approach to “old time religion” which did not resist the rise of the early-twentieth-century modern era but rather posited conservative Protestant women as making a vital contribution to the development of modern social reform. The follow sections examine how McPherson went about this task by inventing a new mode of humanitarian leadership which stemmed from her model of sisterly service, beginning with her 1920s founding of the Temple commissary and the Foursquare City Sisters.
“Bridges of Ability” Meet “Sunny Smiles”:
The Temple Commissary, the City Sisters, and the Mobilization of Christian Service

In the 1920s Southern California teemed with vibrancy and stood poised to blossom into a major economic, social, and cultural center. The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce Aimee Semple McPherson joined in 1923 bustled with activity, the city’s enterprising leaders building “universities, art centers, civic organizations, and social clubs” in order to create a sparkling new “first-class city.” McPherson’s growing ministry organization made a significant contribution to the city’s rising reputation as a destination for those wanting to spend sunny days under waving palms. In fact, the Angelus Temple, with its magnificent dome and its inviting, upbeat lady pastor, quickly became an arrival spot for new residents who had headed west in search of a better life. Still, as Sutton notes, visitors to Los Angeles in the late 1920s, although struck by the city’s happy vibe, often failed to notice the “desperate need” which “plagued” many residents.

In 1925, increased economic needs prompted local leaders to establish a well-organized Community Chest equipped to direct the city’s ever-expanding benevolence systems. Several prominent religious organizations joined these efforts, contributing their own organized charitable institutions to the city’s mix.

When McPherson established the Temple commissary in 1927, she too added to city-wide efforts to mitigate poverty, although she did so without entering into formal partnerships with the city’s social service networks and without giving approval either to the spiritual aims of other religious leaders engaged in similar efforts or to the necessarily nonsectarian mission of Los Angeles’s Community Chest. Even so, despite its separateness, McPherson’s commissary, which was designed to “regularize the steady stream of requests for assistance that flowed into the Temple,” offered significant help to the city’s needy and destitute. Within five months of
its opening, the Temple commissary had provided over a thousand families with food and clothing, in addition to giving “a substantial amount of furniture, blankets, and mattresses” to the “very needy.” As noted in the October 1927 Bridal Call-Foursquare, the commissary constituted another “pinnacle of achievement” in McPherson’s expanding institutional matrix and quickly became a place where “the hundreds of unfortunates find the means to tide them over until better times.” As McPherson and the team of ICFG members who followed her into these endeavors understood it, the Temple commissary’s advantage lay in its ability to hand out relief materials without having to traverse the sort of “red tape” which encumbered the Community Chest and its associated agencies. Free from the limits imposed by external oversight, the commissary enlisted ICFG volunteers to give out donated goods and cash to those seeking immediate help.

When the stock market crashed in October 1929, the Temple commissary’s work of helping the desperate reached a new level of intensity. As Blumhofer remarks, the crash “did not immediately dampen spirits at Angelus Temple,” but, as unemployment began to rise, McPherson’s institutional matrix “began to feel the crunch.” All the same, the commissary rallied with an impressive effort. By the end of 1931 it had emerged as the “best-known” source of relief for a suffering Los Angeles public. McPherson’s addition to the Los Angeles’s service network thus proved essential to efforts to address the multiple crises of want made apparent during the Great Depression—her Temple commissary appearing as a modern wonder of benevolence organization suited to match the modern wonder of the Angelus Temple.

McPherson’s Temple commissary contributed to locally organized charity efforts by extending the practices of personally motivated, emotionally driven charity which had always
been a part of her ministry. As she declared in a September 1927 *Foursquare Crusader* article, the project allowed her to enact a vision that “the Lord has been laying on our hearts that we should go out and help the poor in a larger sense than before.” 56 Even when organized on such a broad-scale, she argued, such efforts still constituted “pure religion and undefiled, that you visit the fatherless and the widow in their distress.” 57 In other words, the Angelus Temple’s modern charitable institution still required an ongoing commitment to aspects of conservative Protestantism, including the call for devout woman to volunteer their time visiting the suffering “in their distress.” As a March 1928 *Bridal Call-Foursquare* article explained, the commissary, with its huge capacity and its motivated personnel, proved that “social service” was not exclusively “a modern invention or discovery,” but rather an outcome of the teachings of Jesus Christ put into action. 58

McPherson’s approach to institutionalized charity blended her version of conservative Protestantism with modern innovation. For example, to encourage donations, McPherson installed a “Lighthouse with a constantly flashing beacon” in the main lobby of Angelus Temple, and with it a “decorative but serviceable Lifeboat moored to the rocks at the foot of the Lighthouse,” all these trappings serving as a hard-to-miss collection point for bundled food and clothing donations. 59 Still, these marks of modern design did not conceal the fact that the commissary was essentially fueled by religious devotion. For instance, ICFG members not only donated cash, goods, and clothing, they also volunteered to move donations from the Angelus Temple lifeboat to the commissary, a large room in the Temple’s school building which contained shelves for the food items that “came pouring through the doors,” as well as clothing racks “filled from end to end with clothing for men, women and children.” 60 The commissary mobilized a modern collection of “workers for Christ Jesus” which included a “trained nurse”
(the first employed by a Los Angeles church) and a “social service worker.” The institution’s employed workers and volunteers followed modern social service protocols which included efforts to “study” each family asking for aid and then maintain “a schedule of constructive helpfulness” for recipients. In this sense, the Temple commissary operated according to more modern standards for scale and efficiency, but always with help of the organization’s primarily female volunteer workforce.

McPherson reinforced Temple commissary’s dual purposes by arguing that her women volunteers’ passionate service was necessary for institution’s efficient functioning. For example in a sermon titled, “To Be Good Is To Do Good,” which was printed in the November 1928 Bridal Call-Foursquare, McPherson posited the commissary’s work as deliberately pairing the inspired energy of those dedicated to practicing Christian charity with the mechanisms of modern social reform. The commissary and its workforce, she argued, demonstrated that Jesus Christ “proved able, willing, efficient, and all sufficient” to handle any “emergency crashed in upon them.” By embracing “social service” as a tool for forwarding wide-spread relief distribution, she explained, the commissary enabled “the world” to experience “the old time gospel of power and practicability.” The “blue-print” which inspired the Temple commissary concretely illustrated what McPherson called Christ’s teachings on “golden and practical deeds” and put the Christian gospel into action in a way which served to “build the engines of service and set the motors of loving deeds in motion for the Lord.” Thus McPherson framed the Temple commissary as a modern institution designed for efficiency (notably one which could also be efficiently replicated by ICFG branch churches in other states) yet simultaneously empowered by the heart-felt efforts of Christian women volunteers.
The Temple commissary, McPherson argued, brought the vast resources of conservative Protestant women’s passionate service to bear on the massive problems of displacement and poverty precipitated by the Great Depression. As she exclaimed in the June 1929 *Bridal Call-Foursquare*, no other church matched the “wide scale of charitable work” accomplished through the commissary, a “bridge of ability” which enabled a “golden path of service.” In 1931 she announced plans to extend the commissary’s work “in a bigger and better way” with the addition of expanded facilities. The new building, which would house an additional dining hall and employment bureau, was donated by the Yellow Cab Company. The renovations to the building McPherson proposed were slated to cost $15,000. The commissary’s new features would include, on the first floor, “the dispensary, reception, fumigation, laundry, day nursery, employment office and City Sisters’ rooms.” This last listed space was intended to provide for the rest and restoration of commissary’s extensive female volunteer force. Additionally, the second floor would contain rooms for “the sewing committee” who made cloths for donation to the needy as well as for “a display room” where the City Sisters could showcase their seamstress work. As a January 1932 *Foursquare Crusader* article declared, “in every way” the new building was “run with order, cleanliness, and to the satisfaction of the Board of health departments.” In all of this, McPherson’s commissary remained in synch with the systemization, professionalization, and mechanization characteristic of a modern social reform institution even as it also institutionalized a value for the volunteer service of middle-class Protestant women.

McPherson explicitly juxtaposed her approach to mobilizing passionate service to “the usual breadline, established by they who institute a charitable department,” in other words, the usual agency (whether public or private) set up to care for the needs of the poor. She
described, for example a distress call made to Angelus Temple by “a convict in Folsom penitentiary, beseeching pity” who received in response donations of food and clothing “tucked in the back of a ‘trouble car’” (one of the cars whose use was donated through the City Sisters) and motored to his wife and children at home. “Now tell me,” she queried after recounting the tale of rescue, “don’t you believe that as long as that poor, unhappy man lives he will be grateful and have a tender spot in his heart toward Christ and toward His church, because they stood by him in the hour of need?” According to McPherson, the sorts of personal connections her City Sisters made with the people they served helped the commissary’s ability to function as a modern institution. When her volunteers made it a point to “enter the homes of the poverty-ridden” and “see conditions as they really exist,” they were better able than ostensibly secular humanitarian agents to construe “a splendid workable plan” for ensuring that aid went to the truly needy. Of course, personal visits by the City Sisters inevitably included “in almost every instance” leading aid recipients “through prayer, to the feet of the Crucified One.” In this, McPherson’s modern commissary carried on, although in a modified form, the previous era’s tradition of “friendly visiting,” the sending of women volunteers to supply both relief and moral direction for the people they served.

McPherson’s framing of the work of the commissary dining hall also demonstrated a way in which her institutional organization sought to combine efficient standards for benevolence distribution with inspired passionate Christian service. As McPherson often noted, the commissary’s method of food distribution reduced bureaucratic “red tape” by allowing hungry people to receive food without extensive investigative scrutiny. Instead, the men who came to the dining hall for meals received food and were invited to hear “a short evangelistic talk” and participate in “a song service.” One of the ways in which the commissary reduced red tape was
by feeding recent arrivals to Los Angeles, a practice which openly flouted county regulations requiring that aid recipients prove that they had resided in the area the for at least a year. As McPherson explained, whereas many charities investigated whether or not a needy person was “worthy” for aid, “Our theory is that it is better to feed one worthy man and nine unworthy ones than to miss the worthy. We feed them and then we investigate.” “Feed Them First” became the slogan by which McPherson distinguished her modern charitable institutions from others in the Los Angeles community. She held up the Temple commissary and its facilities as offering an improvement to the city’s benevolence operations, one made possible through the extension of Christian compassion to all regardless of legal requirements. In McPherson’s line of argument, her leadership of an institution which offered food, song, and unconditional love (all of these services implicitly indicated as provided through the zealous service of Christian women volunteers) increased both the quality and the reach of modern systems designed to deliver humanitarian relief.

Passionate Christian service as a practical and spiritual practice was posited as the fuel impelling the extensive network of charitable systems which McPherson led. As she explained, the commissary’s shelves and clothing racks were “constantly emptied and as constantly filled by the members and friends of Angelus Temple, who come to church with their arms loaded with bundles for the poor.” “When a Foursquare fan buys his groceries,” she boasted, “he purchases an extra loaf of bread, or an extra bottle of milk. When the baby’s shoes become too small, he brings them to the commissary.” Donations brought in by “Foursquare fans” were squired away by the ICFG’s volunteer workforce. To this practical arrangement, McPherson added the encouragement for supporters of the commissary to pray, asserting that “earnest prayer that God will supply the funds, food, and equipment” remained “necessary to continue this great work.”
She even installed a “Watch Tower” in the new dining hall in order to open space for “students and friends” to bring their devout spirituality to bear on the commissary’s success.83

Yet the Temple commissary got its fuel not just from passionate Christian service in general, but from the mobilization of McPherson’s women followers in particular. As an August 1927 Foursquare Crusader article recounted, the commissary was launched out of the concerted efforts of “a large body of women, who offered their services to assist in this great undertaking,” this group later dubbed the Foursquare City Sisters (a designation which played on McPherson’s own honorary title of “Everybody’s Sister”).84 The City Sisters, a number of whom “had business experience” and knew “something about the management of such a group,” received a commission from McPherson to literally “man the Boat” readied for donations in Angelus Temple’s lobby and to “go anywhere at any time in response to the wailing of a new-born babe, the cries of weary or desolate souls, or the moans of a dying brother or sister.”85 The City Sisters took up primary responsibility for fulfilling McPherson’s “new plan to cover the city, county, and possibly the southern part of the state” with a “great service relief bureau.”86 Several women took charge of committees appointed to specific tasks, including “calling on the sick and needy” and “doing the inside work at the Lighthouse and Employment Bureau.”87 They worked busily, serving “scores of people” and “lovingly” listening to “the tale[s] of woe told by many who are without family, home or work” until late into the night.88

McPherson added to her leadership of the City Sisters the broader argument that the mobilization of sisterly service held the potential to fulfill the aspirations of early-twentieth-century modernity, not only that of scientific efficiency but also that of equality—the alleviation of suffering for all regardless of race or creed. “White or black, Catholic or Protestant, Jew or
Gentile,” she wrote, “it matters not, wherever there is trouble and a heart is bowed with sorrow, there go the white-clad Sisters of Love with their sunny smiles and their ready aid.”\textsuperscript{89} This lofty end appeared undermined to some extent by McPherson’s attempts to mobilize Christian service using middle-class resources with the aim of helping individuals attain middle-class status.\textsuperscript{90} In fact, McPherson explicitly framed her charitable ministries as aimed at edifying “the middle classes” and leaving “those above to themselves and those below to the Salvation Army.”\textsuperscript{91} She encouraged the Temple’s middle-class members to use their social and economic resources to actively care for needy families and individuals, such as in her request for “every Foursquare member and friend who wishes to employ” to seek out the unemployed through the comissary’s employment bureau.\textsuperscript{92} She also implicitly counseled her audiences to accept class hierarchies, such as in a reprinted 1927 sermon which instructed her audience that “happiness is not found in earthly possessions!– nor, is it found in social position.”\textsuperscript{93} Thus McPherson positioned the comissary as a source for upward mobility but not necessarily as a means for challenging the class distinctions which separated those with access to economic and social resources from those without.

Nevertheless, McPherson’s advocacy for sisterly service through the Temple comissary at least to some degree promoted equality. In making this point, McPherson made the argument that suffering, as an emotional force which she herself was familiar with, was something shared by all individuals equally; suffering as a universally shared condition provided an added impetus for stirring up motivations to serve among her followers. “We have all suffered,” she exclaimed before the audience gathered to witness the comissary’s opening in 1927.\textsuperscript{94} “We have all known tears and heaviness of heart. Not a life is there in the world without its quota of sorrow.”\textsuperscript{95} With suffering framed as an experience held in common by all of humanity, she
went on: “Let us ever strive to lighten our brother’s load and dry the tears of a sister; race, creed and status make no difference, we are all one in the eyes of the Lord.”\footnote{96} Using words like these, McPherson posited suffering as vital to her modern yet passionate approach to social reform. She personally modeled how suffering stoked a sisterly service which aimed at extending beyond the barriers of “race, creed, and status.” Service of this sort thus proved a proper starting point for achieving the modern goals of universal humanitarianism.

McPherson demonstrated how the sort of service she sought to provide might aid the development of modern social reform specifically by articulating how her personal experiences with suffering motivated her to extend compassion to humanity’s most needy: “I, myself, have suffered so much that I want to lighten the burdens of others,” she proclaimed at the Temple commissary’s founding. “Will you help me?”\footnote{97} McPherson’s words invited listeners to participate in the Temple commissary’s mission through the channel of her personal pain—her sufferings as a widow, her frequent bouts with illness, her unfortunate divorce, her ongoing physical and emotional weakness, and her loneliness.\footnote{98} In this sense, she attempted to engender support for the commissary by showing how her unique acquaintance with suffering might cultivate passions which would promote sympathy and care for the needy. For example, in a November 1931 \textit{Foursquare Crusader} article she wrote, “I see them coming now, the poor and the needy. They come in hungry, they come in ragged. If you could see them, those dear, eager faces, and the bare feet and tousled heads of the dear children, it would break your heart.”\footnote{99} McPherson thus encouraged listeners to interpret and respond to the condition of human suffering through her personal witness of it. The call she made for her followers to identify with human suffering through their resonance with McPherson’s own suffering helped translate her model of sisterly service into a vision for universal humanitarian service.
In all of these ways, McPherson’s emphasis on sisterly service undergirded her leadership of the Temple commissary and the City Sisters. By illustrating the potentialities of this model of passionate Christian service, McPherson argued for an approach to modern social reform which proposed to efficiently and comprehensively alleviate suffering, even as it demonstrated the ongoing relevance of conservative Protestant values to humanitarian causes. The next section further examines this trend and indicates how McPherson’s promotion of Christian service encouraged not only the extension of the ICFG’s institutionalized charity network but also late-1920s and 30s expansions to state-based benevolence systems.

To “Hold High the Standard of Government and Church”:
“Old Time Religion” Offered in Service to the State

The market crash of 1929 unfolded into an unprecedented economic and social crisis in the early-1930s. As Kennedy writes, five thousand banks failed between October 1929 and March 1933 taking with them “some $7 billion in depositors’ money.”100 Hundreds of thousands of homeowners lost property through foreclosures between 1930 and 1932. Notwithstanding the severity of such wide-spread losses, unemployment and wage reductions proved “the most obvious and the most wounding of all the Depression’s effects.”101 Twenty-five percent of the American work force was unemployed in 1933. The most vulnerable were the hardest hit, including “the very young, the elderly, the least educated, the unskilled.”102 As Kennedy adds, the burden of want and dispossession fell especially hard on those rural populations already situated in precarious economic positions, even before the 1929 crash.103
Not surprisingly, the 1930s ushered in a new openness on the part of both politicians and the public to increase the government’s efforts to intervene in the crisis. In a notable example of such openness, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, while serving as Governor of New York, enacted the 1931 New York Temporary Relief Administration, a plan for involving the state in the extension of relief “not as a matter of charity, but as a matter of social duty.” Two years later, after having been elected President of the United States, FDR took the notion of government intervention even further, endeavoring to install, during his first months in office, what his administration called “New Deal” legislation intended to stop the nation’s slide into economic disaster and restore economic stability. Toward this end, early in his first term, Roosevelt pressed forward plans for a new Federal Emergency Relief Administration which would “coordinate and eventually increase direct federal unemployment assistance to the states.” In May 1933, FERA, headed by Harry Hopkins, took on its charge of “dispensing some $500 million of federal relief money” to states who then distributed primarily food and clothing relief through local commissaries. For all the effort put into it, however, FERA remained “an emergency body,” with a “skeletal” support system, not yet fully equipped to handle such a “vast national crisis.” On top of that, Hopkins, as FERA’s chief director, struggled to find ways to motivate public support for the federal government’s involvement in relief distribution, the massive extent of the Depression’s impact limiting in some sense the public’s capacity to “touch the face of the catastrophe” and thus continue to understand the state’s unprecedented relief expenditures as a social duty requiring broad national sacrifice.

Despite such challenges, urban areas like Los Angeles, hard hit by the Depression and simultaneously overburdened by populations of migrants moving to cities to escape rural poverty, benefited significantly from increased state involvement in relief distribution. In fact, as
Engh notes, by the early-1930s, Los Angeles’s Community Chest, the area’s largest organized charity system, received almost all of its relief funds from “government agencies.” As Katherine Lovell writes, with the help of FERA aid, California “compared favorably” with other states with regard to its ability to meet the overwhelming burdens imposed on social agencies by high unemployment. Nevertheless, the State of California’s relative appearance of economic health provoked additional difficulties, namely an early-1930s “inrush of poverty-stricken persons” who had left the “factories and farms of most other states” in search of sunnier shores. Incoming migrants posed a new exigency for California legislators, one which they responded to by passing more and more stringent residency requirements for incomers requesting public aid. As of 1901, California had required a three-month county and state residency before an application for public aid could be filed. In 1929 the state’s residency requirement for aid recipients became one year, this rate mirroring the standard stipulation of most other states. Yet in 1931, California increased its residency requirements far beyond that standard, setting up a “residence wall” of three years before access to public relief could be granted. On top of that, in 1933, the state legislators added a one-year county residency requirement for aid recipients.

Aimee Semple McPherson’s charitable network contributed significantly to the development of state-based benevolence during the late 1920s and 1930s, even as its operations exposed some of the difficulties inherent to the state’s tough policies regarding migrants. As the leader of the Temple commissary and the ICFG’s other benevolence endeavors, McPherson made the particular contribution of offering Christian service in service to the state, if not always in full compliance with state regulations. In fact, she actively led the ICFG’s charitable network into partnerships with the state and advocated for the development of the U.S. welfare state, these moves meant to ensure that the state’s relief programs, necessitated by the extreme crisis of
the Depression, were staged both efficiently and sympathetically. Her leadership emphasized government benevolence systems as requiring the influence of conservative Protestantism. In this way, McPherson’s commitment to serving the state to some degree obscured her charitable network’s claim to independence, thus morphing her ministry’s charitable mandate to serve the needy into a mandate to promote social order and enhance state authority.

All the same, McPherson wielded her vision for mobilizing Christian service through the ICFG toward a very different end when it came to feeding California’s significant migrant populations. When applying the balm of what she articulated as sisterly service to the “migrant problem,” she presented her approach as both different from that of the state and an improvement with regard to the mechanisms of modern social reform, her compassionate mission to feed migrants crafting a humanitarian strategy which proved more comprehensive and more in tune with the ideals of modern equality than those designed by California’s legislators. Yet feeding migrants did not stop McPherson from making strenuous efforts to craft a partnership between her charitable ministries and the state. Her oft demonstrated willingness to buttress the state’s authority, despite her open flouting of anti-migrant legislation, elucidated tensions within her efforts to blend Christian service, aspects of the new woman, and early-twentieth-century statism. McPherson’s leadership during this period tested the limits of her modern social reform vision, the style of service she advocated appearing, to some degree, more responsive to the demands of state authority than to the dual goals of promoting Christian charity and modern equality.

As of the late 1920s, McPherson’s charitable network remained independently funded, receiving all of its resources through donations from private individuals and businesses. At the
same time, the Temple commissary maintained “friendly and co-operative relations” with “the leading social service agencies.” In a spirit of cooperation with public agencies, McPherson often rallied the commissary to buttress public relief efforts when city distribution systems failed under the added strain of the Depression. For instance, in June 1931, a *Foursquare Crusader* article announced that the Los Angeles Parent-Teachers Association had sought assistance from Angelus Temple for over ten thousand school children who “had been going without lunches for some time.” Within twelve hours of receiving the call, the Temple answered the request by recruiting “scores of men and women” to prepare “over 250 substantial lunches” and then deliver them to the PTA for distribution. A week later, the *Foursquare Crusader* announced that “fifteen hundred lunches a day have been sent out from Angelus Temple to that number of poor, weak, sick, undernourished children in the Los Angeles schools.” The Temple’s help in supplementing PTA funds, which “had been exhausted several weeks ago,” provided for a mere one-tenth of the city’s needy school children. Be that as it may, the article added that McPherson’s cooperation with the PTA had inspired other “churches and organizations” to respond to the cause of feeding hungry boys and girls. In this, McPherson demonstrated her ability to mobilize passionate Christian service on behalf of the state, her ICFG volunteers quickly propping up the city’s faltering efforts to care for hungry children.

McPherson’s work during the Depression era in leading her charitable organization to cooperate with the state earned her a favorable reputation among various public authorities. According to Sutton, her willingness to serve the state helped developed an attachment between her and “to the local political establishment,” one forged out of the increasingly vital service her ministries provided to local state agencies. Articles in the *Foursquare Crusader* averred this claim, trumpeting McPherson’s ability to build “friendly” relations within the context of her
dealings with authorities such as the Mayor of Los Angeles and “police and firemen.”\textsuperscript{119} In fact, her ties to the state were so close that, as a January 1931 \textit{Foursquare Crusader} indicated, local police and fire stations even served as distribution centers for the tickets required for admittance to the Temple commissary’s dining hall.\textsuperscript{120} As Sutton suggests, the commissary’s “closeness” to state authorities signaled more than an attempt to ensure the efficiency of relief efforts. It also indicated McPherson’s desire to assure “business and civic leaders” that the commissary’s ministries intended to produce “temperate and submissive workers and citizens” rather than stir up the sorts of revolutionary sentiments which aimed to upend established social, political, and economic systems.\textsuperscript{121} In this sense, McPherson’s leadership of the ICFG’s charitable ministries demonstrated how passionate Christian service might serve the purpose, on the one hand, of generously feeding the poor but, on the other, of preserving the power and privileges of the city’s most prominent citizens.

McPherson took a similar tack when it came to enhancing state authority through advocacy on behalf of 1930s expansions to the U.S. welfare state. In 1933, for example, McPherson rallied the Angelus Temple to embrace President Roosevelt’s New Deal, even “joining a parade through Los Angeles hailing the NRA’s Blue Eagle” as a symbol indicating Los Angeles’s imminent return to prosperity.\textsuperscript{122} To boot, in a January 1934 \textit{Foursquare Crusader} article, McPherson argued that the Blue Eagle, just like the church, held the potential to unite the country across differences. “We are hoping that business men will not fight each other,” she exclaimed, “but that they will pull together, and that humanity will be closer drawn together. This is not time for us to be hedging about and hating each other. We are one after all, all common kin, with one flag, one Bible, one country.”\textsuperscript{123} On top of that, in a March 1934 \textit{Foursquare Crusader} article, McPherson dubbed Roosevelt a “‘Godsend’ to the American
people, divinely placed at the head of this nation’s government to guide it out of its most depressive, if not near-fatal period in history.” She praised the President for accomplishing “so much in so short a time” and “asking suggestions from his people and applying them,” his administration’s efficiency and relational skill striking her as “marvelous.” McPherson thus extolled Roosevelt for leading the country in a way which, according to her, reflected the values of unity, sympathy, and social harmony similarly held by her and by members of the ICFG.

McPherson’s embrace of the President’s leadership and her advocacy on behalf of the New Deal concretely illustrated her intent to mobilize the sort of Christian service which would “hold high the standard of government and church,” these words positing the ICFG’s service work as aimed not only at fulfilling the duties of Christian mission but at maintaining and strengthening the auspices of the state. As she argued in a May 1931 Foursquare Crusader article, the type of Christian service her humanitarian endeavors encouraged was a greater power “for good, civilization, culture, refinement than anything else in the world.” A nation, she argued, that wanted to develop “refinement, talent, skill” needed to follow the model she and her middle-class, primarily female ICFG volunteer workforce provided. Conversely, those who followed in the ways of Christian service needed to also be found “cooperating more favorably with civic government, for the church is a law abiding people.” In this way, McPherson exhorted her readers to help the needy and the suffering but as citizens of the United States committed to keeping the nation’s laws and upholding its appointed leaders. In short, McPherson exhorted an approach to Christian service which envisioned Christian faith as a means for buttressing and improving the functioning of the state.
For all that, McPherson’s leadership of the Temple commissary included a major exception to this pattern of congenial relations with state authority, namely the intentional and bold effort to side-step California’s residency requirements and offer emergency food and clothing relief to the state’s migrant populations. According to Sutton, with the throws of the Depression intensifying in the early-1930s, public leaders deflected attention from “deep-rooted structural problems inherent in capitalism” by blaming migrants entering California from other states and Mexico for the economic crisis. Anti-immigrant feelings fueled the creation of a residence wall preventing migrants from receiving public aid. As for McPherson, she made her desire to feed migrants clear from the first days of the commissary’s operation. For example, the commissary’s role in filling the gaps in state relief distribution was proudly announced in an August 1927 *Foursquare Crusader* article describing how a group of City Sisters (with additional monetary donations from a group of Masons) helped a “little family” that had moved to California from Arizona, lost “their abode in a little auto camp,” and then been left hungry for days. Even with the obvious persistence of tensions between incomers and the state, McPherson beckoned migrants to the Temple, specifically designing programs meant to benefit them and “boldly advertising free aid to all comers.” In a January 1932 *Foursquare Crusader* article, for instance, she reiterated her praise for the “many, many charities” that were “doing great work,” but also her expressed intention to create a charitable network which would stand as unique in its ability to eliminate the sorts of encumbrances the state imposed on recipients. “A year is a long time to wait for a man who is starving,” she explained. McPherson gave some credence to the need to investigate recipients to make sure they were, indeed, distressed but proposed doing this only after having first given hungry people what they needed to survive the day. “Feed them first” was the slogan used to justify the Temple commissary’s scofflaw policy
which put the ideal of Christian charity above the authority of the state’s ban on feeding migrants. \[134\]

“Feed them first” also provided McPherson a way to concretely posit the model of Christian service she exemplified as unique it its ability to realize the aims of modern equality. Through her stalwart willingness to supply aid to not only migrants from other states but also from Mexico, McPherson led the Temple commissary to become a modern institution where indeed, “Race or religious conviction is no bar to her food. To get there one has but to ask for it.” \[135\] McPherson’s inclusive policies made her, in Blumhofer’s terms, “a star to many Los Angeles Mexicans.” \[136\] Immigrants who had entered the country illegally “dreaded appealing to government agencies for relief” but knew that the Temple commissary workers “would help them, no questions asked.” \[137\] In 1930 McPherson established her reputation as an advocate for equality even further by founding the “McPherson Mexicana Mission,” a Spanish-speaking Foursquare church and commissary in East Los Angeles. The next year, she opened a Bible school for Spanish-speaking pastors in order to provide an increasing number of Latino Foursquare churches with indigenous leaders. All the same, McPherson did appoint a white leader to oversee the new Spanish-language district later established in Southern California, a decision which demonstrated the limited extent to which she was willing to go to translate her vision for mobilizing passionate Christian service into a mode of practical equality which would transcend racial differences. \[138\]

Despite such open disregard for the law, however, McPherson and the Temple commissary’s leaders continued to maintain “friendly” relations with public service providers. In other words, McPherson found ways to ameliorate relations with state authorities, even while
continuing to feed migrants. For instance, as Sutton writes, in 1932 when the county superintendent of charities launched a plan to weed out Los Angeles “moochers” by requiring commissary aid recipients to exchange two meals a day for three hours of volunteer work for the county, McPherson responded by intensifying efforts to aid women and children, “a group more vulnerable and less likely to take advantage of Foursquare benevolence.” She fed migrants even though she was pressured by state and local agents to stop, yet, according to Sutton, when a state investigation revealed that around forty percent of relief donations to the Temple commissary when to migrants, the commissary’s leaders responded deferentially, insisting that, when time came for the next investigation, they would no longer be aiding newcomers, but instead “encouraging their return to their home states.” In addition, as the Depression worsened in the mid-1930s, the commissary added some restrictions to its distribution policies in an effort to “reduce waste and abuse,” for instance answering an immediate request for aid once but referring second requests to other agencies, and keeping files on recipients that included a record of the amount of total assistance received from the Temple and from other charities.

McPherson’s attempt to finesse her dealings with state authorities made apparent the precarious balance underlying her stated mission to “hold high the standard of government and church.” When it came to feeding migrants, the one seemed locked in perpetual conflict with the other, McPherson’s efforts to promote passionate Christian service in some ways undermined by the exclusionary practices of the state. Her application of sisterly service proved, at times, more focused on serving state regulations than serving the needy, despite frequent gestures toward the notion the ministries she led held the potential to inspire a universal humanity that transcended social hierarchies. The gospel of “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” she argued in a May 1932 Foursquare Crusader article, inspired “love,” “friendship,” “friendliness,” “brotherly kindness,”
“giving and ministering unto others,” “sharing each others’ joys and sorrows,” unselfishness,” and, notably, “universal brotherhood and service.” Unlike “any other religion, so called, that I know of in the world,” she declared, Christianity brought with it “tenderness,” “mellowness,” “kindliness,” and “love.” With these words, she attempted to show how her approach to Christian service might lead to a “universal brotherhood” (with her, again, as Everybody’s Sister) and thus inspire the public’s tender embrace of “the sick,” “the orphans and widows,” “the cold and shivering,” “the needy,” and “the hungry.” Even so, the path to equality and inclusion she articulated proved significantly challenged by her embrace of statism. The next section examines how, in the mid- to late-1930s, McPherson’s promotion of the IFCG’s approach to Christian service took an even further turn toward statism in her embrace of nationalism and the cause of protecting the hegemony of white, middle-class American culture. By tying her arguments promoting sisterly service in the humanitarian sphere to Americanism during this period, McPherson illustrated an approach to modern social reform which reinforced the very social inequalities the Temple commissary once appeared poised to transcend.

“America Awake!”: McPherson’s 1930s Turn to Nationalism

As Kennedy writes, in the mid-1930s, an end to the Great Depression seemed “nowhere in sight.” Ongoing insecurity and a persistently high unemployment rate created a sense of urgency—the pressing need to discover a way to reverse, rather than just mitigate, the crisis. What Kennedy describes as “frustration born of raised hopes and stalled progress” sparked interest in several “unconventional” strategies for economic and social change. The melee of voices advocating alternatives included those of Huey Long, who started his populist “Share Our
Wealth” campaign in January 1934, and Father Charles Coughlin, the popular “radio priest” who promoted social reform through what Kennedy calls “his own peculiar blend of inflation and anti-Semitism.” Also thrown into the mix were two California-based proponents for social change: Dr. Francis Townsend, who proposed creating old-age pensions in order to free up space in the job market for the young, and Upton Sinclair, the “crusading novelist” and activist who ran for California Governor in 1934 on a “communitarian platform.” California, the destination of many “rootless, restless souls” departing en mass from areas of the Midwest hardest hit by the Depression, made ideal recruiting grounds for alternative political leaders who promised to increase the material prosperity of the poor and the working classes. Still, rising to the forefront of the nation-wide debate over how to best address the crisis of the Depression was the Roosevelt Administration which, in 1935, offered the American public a “Second New Deal,” this set of legislative initiatives designed to move beyond offering immediate relief to the unemployed and needy and usher in a plan for permanent economic recovery. FDR’s second wave of New Deal legislation focused on realigning the economy through the application of what Roosevelt termed “the steadying hand” and “organized control” of government.

The Roosevelt Administration’s plan for instituting recovery through the careful control of capitalism, although innovative, met with significant resistance. For instance, some prominent intellectuals, such as John Dewey, argued that the New Deal’s vision for creating a “controlled and humanized capitalism” remained impossible, given that it left unaddressed the basic flaws of a capitalist economy, a “decaying system” not remediable without a significant ideological change. Further, some public leaders argued that socialism, which proposed the creation of national economies directed through the mechanisms of government planning, provided a plausible alternative to laissez-faire capitalism. Still others joined ranks with the Communist
Party of the United States of America which advocated for “nothing less than the re-construction of American society on the Soviet model.” As the Depression intensified, Communists influenced public debates through political demonstrations (some of which turned violent), rent strikes, hunger marches, efforts to organize labor unions, and recruitment campaigns staged in African-American communities. For all that, the numbers of American Communist Party members remained relatively small (as of 1934, less than 30,000 members). As Kennedy adds, three-fifths of the Communist Party’s membership was “foreign born,” heavily represented by European immigrants and Jews, as well as residents of the country’s largest cities. In this sense, CPUSA drew its constituency primarily from populations which were significantly marginalized with respect to white, middle-class Protestant culture.

Aimee Semple McPherson entered into the mid-1930s fray of debates over plans and alternatives also positioned to some degree on the social and political fringe. Like many conservative Protestants who had retreated to the sidelines of public discourse after the humiliating defeat that was the 1925 Scopes “Monkey Trial,” McPherson, from the late-1920s into the 1930s, focused less on the project of engaging high-profile, controversial public debates, favoring instead a plan for creating “a strong grassroots base in local congregations” which could be developed as a source of social influence. Of course, she continued to speak in public forums which pitted theological modernism against the “fundamentals” of Christian faith. However, as the 1930s progressed, McPherson left “the spotlight” for the most part in order to build up what Blumhofer calls “a silent majority” of “people doing ordinary things often away from the centers of political and social influence.”
As the consequences of the Depression continued to unfold in the mid-1930s, McPherson began to enter into public discussions surrounding the progress of modern social reform, always on the side of holding high “the standard of government and church.” For instance, during this period, she joined a growing group of conservative Protestants who linked “the increasing violence and destruction of property associated with Depression-era strikes” with “communist infiltration of the labor movement.” In this, McPherson diverged from an earlier pattern of supporting workers’ rights, instead endorsing the view that activist labor unions posed a threat to state authority. Additionally, she consistently argued against the compatibility of “communistic social visions” with Christian faith, insisting that the Soviet Union’s status as an “atheistic state” ought to prevent devout Christians from adopting communist economic and social visions. McPherson urged her audiences to actively resist all efforts, no matter how apparently well intentioned, to upend capitalism and the state. She argued instead that Americans needed to “assert their loyalty to God and the flag” and not buy into “the treacherous plots of foreign subversives” wanting to dismantle the government. Poor and laboring populations might be attracted to schemes proposing the radical restructuring of established government and economic systems, she argued, but those who crafted such plans were no doubt the sorts of foreigners who pledged allegiance to the CPUSA rather than to the American nation.

McPherson’s demonstrated commitment to upholding state-based authority structures significantly shaped her approach to social reform during the mid- to late-1930s. Her embrace of statism within the context of modern social reform and her advocacy for the protection of the state from the threat of “foreign” radicalism were often paired with her arguments advocating passionate Christian service as vital to the resolution of the crisis caused by the Great Depression. McPherson posited passion, specifically conservative Protestant women’s drive to
serve the nation, as akin to “Americanism,” or the desire to preserve what she framed as the
country’s original white, Protestant, middle-class culture from challenges to its hegemony.
Through a series of mid- to late-1930s public speaking campaigns, she thus recast her approach
to modern social reform to focus less on a vision for shaping a service-driven, inclusive Christian
charity network than on rallying public audiences to embrace nationalistic sentiments.
McPherson’s turn to Americanism re-inscribed social inequalities between “foreigners” and
white Americans and between the poor and laboring classes and the middle-class. Thus, her
model of Christian service proposed to relieve the nation’s social and economic ills, even as it
worked to obscure the goal of promoting universal Christian charity.

The first of McPherson’s Americanism campaigns was staged in 1934. That year, the
Lady Evangelist staged a nation-wide speaking tour designed to argue that national recovery
from the crisis of the Great Depression required a plan foil the “plots” of what she identified as
communist and socialist infiltrators. The “America Awake!” campaign saw McPherson set off
on a one hundred and fifty day “journey across the nation by rail” which moved “from the
mightiest metropolitan city to the oldest of little jerk-water villages.”

According to her, the
mission of America Awake! entailed taking a “look into the heart of America” and seeing that
the country was “starving for the Word of God.” The campaign drew “more than three-
quarter million persons” and involved “preaching, praying, lecturing, receiving new churches
into the Foursquare faith, broadcasting, meeting city councils, meeting mayors, judges, chambers
of commerce, ministers, Indians, farmers, [and] converts” all across the country.

Crowds
gathered and local leaders stood poised to hear McPherson articulate her vision for ushering in
economic recovery through the awakening of conservative Protestant spirituality.
McPherson’s stock “American Awake!” address, reprinted in two 1934 issues of *The Bridal Call-Foursquare*, tied the advance of nationalism to the mobilization of Christian service, particularly that driven by the feminine sort of passion she had stoked through the ICFG’s ministries. In it, she asserted the stout conviction that the country’s success and its commitment to what she characterized as conventional Christian religious beliefs had always gone hand in hand. “American history has been enriched and endowed by a deep, warm, spiritual stream, strong, full bosomed, all-impelling,” she wrote. The “spiritual stream” of America’s “vast heritage of faith,” she argued, was an “irresistible” force but also a “full bosomed” maternal influence committed to the aims of nurturing protecting the nation. The notion of McPherson’s influence as full bosomed emerged as an additional set of terms to depicting how the feminine impulses undergirding her approach to Christian service provided a sure channel instigating a nation-wide economic recovery.

Continuing on this theme, she added, “Today, the tranquility of our faith is threatened! An enemy, subtle, powerful, relentless, diabolic, is upon us!” The “foe” she sought to “unmask” in her text was what she called “organized, aggressive atheism!” This malignant force, she exclaimed, was trying to transform the emotional tremors of despair, insecurity, and violence brought by the Depression into a “tidal wave of cataclysmic destruction.” McPherson blamed this dangerous trend on Communist enemies who, through their denials of religious faith, were undermining America’s established institutions. “Emanating from red, communistic origin,” she intoned, “the atheistic movement in the United States is an open, wilful [sic.], deliberate attack upon country, home and God!” In short, McPherson implied, the positive influence provided by the mode of Christian values she advocated was being threatened on an emotional and material level by the atheistic influence of Communism.
Yet the enemy McPherson identified was not just Communism as an abstract ideology, rather the person of “a grinning Bolshevik stealthily approaching, with his cap pulled low over his eyes.” America’s most threatening enemy, she explained, was, in fact, what she described as a masculine foreigner who had arrived as an alien in search of sanctuary but bearing untrustworthy motives. The “stealthily approaching” enemy, she argued, had been “royally entertained within our homes,” yet, in return, the “dark, torturous windings and twistings of the Oriental mind with its intrigue, cunning and secret plottings” had lit a “fuse of subversion” meant to ignite an “explosion” to “rend this nation asunder.” McPherson portrayed the “grinning Bolshevik” as answering “royal” treatment in the American home with subversions meant to destroy the generous host. “How much longer,” she asked, “will red-blooded Americans, who claim to be worthy offspring of the Pilgrims, sit still and tolerate this wholesale destruction of the faith of their Fathers?” With these words, McPherson defined “red-blooded Americans” as white Protestant Americans. These were the Americans she asked to “awaken” to looming catastrophe, to resist the foreigner, a “stealthy” male bent on violence, by no longer extending the warm, full bosomed hospitality of the American home to him. In other words, she argued, a foreign, masculine, and dangerous “other” had taken advantage of what McPherson characterized as the feminine hospitality of America. Thus the passionate Christian service which she saw as once enhancing the country’s wealth and greatness now needed to be turned in a different direction—away from universal charity and toward the goal of protecting the American nation from the malign influence of a masculine “other.”

In further explicating its theme of Christian service as a solution to national crisis, McPherson’s “America Awake!” speech made explicit references to the American nation as a vulnerable female on the brink of losing her domestic security, this imagery again equating the
arousal of a feminine passions to the stirring of Americanism. “Miss Columbia is asleep on the capitol steps, all unconscious of the fact that the enemy is removing the foundations of her house,” she wrote. The “grinning Bolshevik” intended to sneak up on the sleeping woman in order to replace the “cornerstone” of the home with “the bomb of atheism.” McPherson envisioned Miss Columbia “stirring from her slumbers, brushing the mists from her eyes.” To this detailed picture, she added an urgent plea for Miss Columbia to “awake” and “call upon Uncle Sam to arrest the communistic alien within our gates and hand him a passport back home.” McPherson’s words showed how the mode of full bosomed passion she advocated might be deployed to summon the country’s will to repel threatening foreign invaders out of the American “home.” In justifying this more martial use of Christian service, she argued that, while the nation’s “friendly, hospitable and trusting” nature had some use, America’s hospitality ought to be limited: “If the alien within our gates likes his own country best, and his system of ethics, and believes his government the finest, there are boats leaving several times a week from both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.” In other words, she argued, the maintenance of American institutions—the nation’s homes, schools, churches, and government—required a willingness to forcefully expel the “alien visitor” with “his infernal machine of world revolution.” In this sense, the approach to Christian service she extolled proved just as effective a means for shoring up Americanism as it had once proved an avenue for extending generous hospitality to the “alien within our gates.”

McPherson’s America Awake! campaign thus attempted to mobilize passionate Christian service in order to promote Americanism as a means toward attaining social stability and economic recovery. “This is no time for bickering and intolerance either political or religious,” she pleaded. According to her, the country’s “heritage of faith” inspired unity, but, in a
noteworthy sense, not around the impulse of Christian love and the extent of welcome to all. Rather, *America Awake!* grounded McPherson’s plan for Depression-ending modern social reform in an exclusionary nationalism which implicitly called for the unification of the country under the morays of white, middle-class Protestant culture. “Whether we be Republican or Democrat, Jew or Gentile, Catholic or Protestant,” McPherson intoned, “we are made of the same clay, worship the same God and swear allegiance to the same country!” In this way, she argued, watchful loyalty to the country’s religious traditions, and suspicion of anyone who diverged from or challenged them, provided the best avenue for saving a nation in crisis. Through *American Awake!* McPherson continued to promote Christian service as essential to the country’s future success, but posited the passion impelling the sort of service she advocated as needing as essentially inspired by nationalism rather than heart-felt sympathy for those situated on the margins of society.

McPherson continued to campaign for Americanism into the fall of 1934 when she began to ramp up her opposition to Upton Sinclair’s run for California Governor. Sinclair entered the Democratic primary in the summer of that year. Influencing the course of the election was a wave of significant economic and social turbulence which included a large labor strike in the Bay Area that had turned violent. To frame his platform, Sinclair developed what he called a plan to End Poverty in California. EPIC included proposals for: “a state takeover of unused lands and idle factories for the purpose of building cooperative communities,” “heavy, graduated income and inheritance taxes,” “pensions for the disabled,” and possible “state-run film companies and public ownership of major businesses.”  

Sinclair’s plan won him a decisive Democratic primary victory, even as it drew strong opposition from local business and political leaders. Nonetheless, Sinclair failed to garner an endorsement from President Roosevelt who
feared that passage of EPIC would endanger the political viability of the New Deal. He still expected, though, to gain support for his candidacy from local leaders like McPherson whose actions and rhetoric had previously demonstrated that they “cared deeply about the poor.”

Sinclair was disappointed in this hope. Not only did McPherson not give him her endorsement, she delivered the keynote address at an anti-Sinclair rally on the Friday before Election Day. In it, she denounced what Sinclair’s opponents had characterized as the candidate’s dual bent toward communism and atheism. The following Sunday, McPherson gave another sermon at the Angelus Temple that ran along similar lines, this one titled, “Enemy Power Invades Christianity,” a none too subtle play on Sinclair’s EPIC campaign. McPherson’s version of EPIC, reprinted in a November 1924 *Bridal Call-Crusader Foursquare*, continued to articulate her vision for promoting national recovery through the incitement of nationalism. Throughout history, she pointed out, American had ushered in “a stream of humanity” from many different countries, immigrants flowing into the country to make it a “great melting pot” which mixed “German, Irish, Italian, English, Norwegian and Swedish, Russian, Jewish, Slavic and all other nationalities from all spots on the globe.” McPherson depicted America’s institutions as standing like proud parents welcoming immigrants with generosity: “And Uncle Sam and Miss America stood and smiled benignly down upon them, welcoming them all cordially to the land of friendship and promise—America.” However, she added, out of the stream of immigrants “crept” a threat, “a man in the garb of a Communist” who “bore a red flag” and a “look of hatred” on his face and took to “the platform” with his “sinister” message. As McPherson argued, the message promulgated by Communist foreigners proved “sinister” in the sense that it threatened national stability and even the stability of the American home once properly governed by Uncle Sam and Miss America.
McPherson’s EPIC invoked Americanism as a way to repel the spread of Communism. “Our laboring people are not Reds!,” she insisted. “When men are hungry and see their families hungry they may become desperately concerned about finding some way to relieve the situation; but that is no reason they should bear the brand of ‘Red.’” The influence of Communism, she claimed, spread through the perpetuation of “any labor trouble or any dissatisfaction or any acute suffering.” In other words, McPherson warned, political plans which promised to upend the status quo, which aroused the “dissatisfaction” of laborers or the socially marginalized, or which proposed the radical over-hall of established economic systems made the country vulnerable to the threat of revolution brought by foreign influences. In her view, leaders who pushed for radical economic and social reforms, like Sinclair, were thus complicit in “foreign subversion.” The EPIC platform, she reasoned, only inspired revolt against American institutions, whereas the call to increased nationalism she intoned promised to yield stability.

Despite its explicit intention to vilify Sinclair and his supporters, McPherson’s EPIC posited social harmony as the ultimate end of her efforts to rally nationalistic sentiments through the mobilization of Christian service. “I am not so much interested in Democrats or Republicans,” she asserted. “I am interested in the Word of God and keeping the Bible in the home, keeping the Bible in our Nation and in the hearts of our people. I am interested in America.” McPherson posited her example of Christian service as upholding and reinforcing national interests. For the sake of “this great Nation,” she argued, “God’s grace” promised to awaken “our great State of California” and help it “lead them all in putting down and stamping out this thing that so endangers our welfare,” namely the influx of “Communistic doctrine.” According to her, passionate Christian service, when cultivated in her audiences, could be deployed to “stamp out” subversives like Sinclair.
McPherson’s campaigning for Americanism and simultaneous promotion of Christian service continued as the decade progressed. For instance, in an article titled, “The Prodigal Son Called Sam,” a sermon reprinted in a July 1935 *Bridal Call-Crusader Foursquare*, she figured “Uncle Sam” as the wayward younger son from Jesus’ parable in the Gospel of Luke, the son who lived a life of dissipation and then, out of his misery, repented and returned to the home of his generous father. Like the younger son, McPherson explained, “Sam” had been “singularly favored and blest” by God, but chose to go down the paths of “Modernism,” “Commercialism,” Radicalism,” “Socialism,” and “Communism.” As a consequence of these decisions, he was afflicted by “floods, strikes, earthquakes and dust-storms,” as well as the market crash of 1929. Adding to the sense of looming despair derived from Sam’s departure from his father’s home, she went on, “Down the street came the rat-a-tat of the machine-gun. Tragedy stalked, unchecked through every phase of modern life. National guard troopers were called into action to subdue the mobs.” In the face of this chaos, even FDR’s Blue Eagle “failed to soar above our economic problems.” McPherson depicted Sam’s misery in order to illustrate America’s need to “get back to God and the Bible” in a “mass movement” of Christian devotion intended to incite economic recovery. Thus she framed Americanism as the desired outcome of her call for the nation to embrace conservative Protestantism.

McPherson still, at times, interpreted the economic and social crises of the 1930s as rooted in inescapable flaws embedded within the nation’s political systems, this line of argument reminiscent of a Pentecostal premillenialism which understood the world’s future doom as inevitable, given humanity’s inherent rebelliousness against Jesus Christ. For instance, in discussing the increasing outbreak of violent strikes in a February 1937 *Foursquare Crusader* article, she wrote, “What does it all mean? It means we are getting ready for the Anti-Christ,
who, after all these things are unionized, will take the government and run things his own way.”\textsuperscript{201} In other words, once “Socialism and Communism” overcame democracy through the gathering of “unionized” workers, evil would take hold in a way that would signal the end of the world and Jesus Christ’s imminent return.\textsuperscript{202} As McPherson added, this development proved that democracy remained inherently vulnerable to the forces of destruction. In this line of reasoning, the collapse of America’s government and economic systems indicated the immanent coming reign of the “Anti-Christ,” a development which could not be stopped and could only be overcome by the equally inevitable future establishment of God’s reign earth.

For all that, at the close of the decade, McPherson articulated the instigation of national recovery through the inspiration of Americanism as the primary focus of her ministry. For instance, in her 1939 Independence Day address, reprinted in a July \textit{Foursquare Crusader}, she again urged readers to learn how to recognize “traitors and foreign enemies!”\textsuperscript{203} She reasserted her extreme solution to the threat they posed: “If they do not like the Bible of America and the fact that this is a Christian nation born and steeped in Christianity, we can escort them to the waters and say ‘Goodbye,’ go back to your own land, no hard feelings, but we won’t have you here.”\textsuperscript{204} McPherson displaced her previous emphasis on hospitality and the achievement of modern equality through Christian service with a nationalistic refrain laced with a show of religious devotion: “You say you do not believe in God, Brother? Then I don’t see how you can be a true American.”\textsuperscript{205} Expression of the sort of Christian faith McPherson confessed, in this sense, became a litmus test for Americanism. McPherson imagined a nation that was not “half and half” but “one hundred percent for the God of our fathers.” In this way, she modeled her approach to Christian service as, in some sense, expelling the lesser “half” of the nation and, in her estimation, thus rescuing the country from “the brink of catastrophe.”\textsuperscript{206}
In all of this, McPherson recast her approach to Christian service as engendering nationalism, rather than promoting an approach to modern social reform in which “race, creed and status make no difference, we are all one in the eyes of the Lord.” Her turn to Americanism in the mid- to late-1930s changed the impetus of her model of service toward the ends of suspicion and exclusion rather than hospitality and welcome. Her vision for instigating “full bosomed” social reform thus significantly departed from her previous efforts to encourage Christian charity as another mode of universal humanitarianism. With Christian service as a vehicle for Americanism, distinctions between people—especially between “foreigners” and “true-blooded Americans,” “true Americans” and those who “do not believe in God”—went from making “no difference” to determining whether the nation would achieve recovery or collapse under a foreign threat.

Conclusion

Aimee Semple McPherson articulated a vision for Christian service impelled by passion while simultaneously advancing modern scientism and statism. Still, within the push and pull between the dual parts of her mission to “hold high the standard of government and church,” McPherson adapted her example of Christian service to move in a new and troubling direction. She, in fact, turned her advocacy for “sisterly” or “full bosomed” service into a more explicit embrace of Americanism as the crisis of the Great Depression worsened in the mid- to late-1930s. The implication of the shift in her model of Christian service included a vigorous attempt to rally enthusiasm around the explicit rejection of those situated outside of white, middle-class Protestant culture. McPherson’s attempts to lead the nation into Christian service thus emerged
as undermining rather than advancing the aspirations of early-twentieth-century modern humanitarianism, its endorsement of nationalism proving more a resource for enhancing social inequalities than for challenging them.

McPherson’s mobilization of sisterly service through her leadership of the Temple commissary and the City Sisters initially invoked at least the possibility of an approach to social reform which combined modern strategies for responding to human suffering and need with conservative Protestantism. However, the model of full bosomed service she exemplified in her campaigning for Americanism contributed to the martial exclusion of the poor and socially marginalized and to the perpetuation of social oppression. Her case raises questions as to how a religious woman leader might invent a justification for her humanitarian authority not troubled by the pairing of Christian service and nationalism. For the further examination of this quandary, the next chapter turns to the case of Dorothy Day’s vision for promoting “motherly” service.

2 Clark, “Miracles,” 357.
3 Clark, “Miracles,” 357.
9 Pascoe, 193.
11 Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 61, 68.
12 Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 72.
14 Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 77-89.
15 Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 92-93.
16 Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 97-101
17 Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 104.
18 Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 117.
20 Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 144.
23 Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 119.
27 quoted, Sutton, Aimee Semple McPherson, 43.
28 quoted, Sutton, Aimee Semple McPherson, 43.
29 Sutton, Aimee Semple McPherson, 46. For all her ecumenicalism, McPherson ironically reinforced her authority as the leader of an independent Pentecostal movement as her ministry grew in size and scope. In 1922, for example, she returned her evangelist credentials to the Assemblies of God, effectively establishing her position as an independent Pentecostal pastor, in part as the result of her persistent desire to form partnerships with churches which were traditionally unsupportive of the sorts of spiritual gifts Pentecostals advocated, a practice which the AOG’s leadership opposed. (Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 176-77.) To boot, McPherson irked some fundamentalists leaders, notably “Fighting” Bob Shuler who complained that she “trivialized the gospel ministry” by appearing “upbeat,” “frivolous,” and “unconscionably lighthearted” (Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 257). While Shuler attacked “Jews, Catholics, African Americans, and California politicians,” McPherson pitched a contrasting gospel of welcome for all. (Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 257.)
30 quoted, Sutton, Aimee Semple McPherson, 46. Sutton finds evidence of McPherson’s ecumenicalism in her theological depiction of the Foursquare Gospel, the creed which later defined the church she founded. McPherson derived this central teaching from an vision in the book of Ezekiel describing a creature with four faces—a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. The man represented Jesus as savior, the lion Jesus as baptizing with the Holy Spirit, the ox Jesus as healer, and the eagle Jesus as coming King. As Sutton argues, McPherson’s Foursquare Gospel had historical roots in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Pentecostal and holiness groups who envisioned their revivalist ministries as continuing a tradition of church reform begun with Martin Luther’s Reformation in the sixteenth century and carried on by Wesleyans in the eighteenth century. (Sutton, Aimee Semple McPherson, 44-45. See also, Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 206.)
31 Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 243.
32 Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 243.
33 Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 4.
34 Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 253.
41 Sutton adds that during the 1920s McPherson also modernized her physical appearance, identifying with that era’s new woman who bobbed her hair, painted her face, modeled stylish fashions, and stepped out of the traditional roles of wife and mother (Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 158-59). Nevertheless, he argues, although McPherson in many ways embraced the image of a modern woman, she also persisted in acting out “stereotypes of women as the weaker, submissive sex” (Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 112). In this sense, her gender identity proved flexible. At times she cast herself as an advocate for women’s equality and at times as “a hapless victim crying out for help.” (Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 112.)
46 Michael E. Engh, S.J., “‘A Multiplicity and Diversity of Faiths’: Religion’s Impact on Los Angeles and the Urban West, 1890-1940,” *The Western Historical quarterly* 28, no. 4 (1997), 477. As Engh notes, in the 1920s, Los Angeles Episcopalians and Catholics expanded and professionalized their denominational charitable institutions, in this way increasing their capacity to partner with the city in delivering relief services for the needy. Also, in 1929, the city’s Jewish charities contributed a “social service bureau” to the local charitable matrix (Engh, 477).
47 For example, in a *Foursquare Crusader* article from September 1927, McPherson publicly chastised the city’s Federal Council of Churches of Christ, a collection of church leaders mostly from traditional Protestant denominations, for casting aspersions on “evangelism and evangelists” while remaining “ossified, petrified, self-denied skeletons of orthodoxy, in frock coats and plug hats” unable to reach “the poor soul drifting helplessly about on the sea of life.” (Aimee Semple McPherson, “Bring Them In!,” *Foursquare Crusader*, September 14, 1927, 2.) Additionally, she actively distinguished the work being done through the comissary from that of the Community Chest, to which the ICFG did not contribute funds. Appeals for contributions to the Temple comissary stressed the need for supporters to give “all you can afford to the comissary department of the Angelus Temple” and not to the Community Chest whose funds were used for “salaries or anything like that” rather than “exclusively for charity.” (unauthored, “Chest Funds Do Not Aid Temple,” *Foursquare Crusader*, November 14, 1928, 11.)
53 Engh, “Multiplicity,” 480.


unauthored, “Pure Religion and Undefiled,” *The Bridal Call-Foursquare*, August 1928, 15. An August 1927 *Foursquare Crusader* article described the commissary’s collection station in the Angelus Temple lobby in detail: “Standing fifteen feet in height, lighted and painted to look like a lighthouse, with even the rocks around the edge, the new Angelus Temple Relief Bureau is the center of attraction in the foyer. A petite young lady, wearing a sailor blouse, with blue serge pleated skirt and sailor cap, occupies a place in the lighthouse and all requests and information come to her attention.” (unauthored, “Lighthouse Workers Are Steadily On Job,” *Foursquare Crusader*, August 6, 1927, 5.)


McPherson, “To Be Good,” 23.

McPherson, “To Be Good,” 23.


The installment of the City Sisters’ rooms signaled to a degree the middle-class preferences of the commissary’s women volunteers. The rooms contained, for instance, a furnished “ladies’ lounge” with “comfortable chairs and couches,” as well as “a table and mirror,” where City Sisters could go to refresh themselves. (unauthored, “City Sisters Enlarge Work,” *Foursquare Crusader*, October 10, 1928, 6.)

“Ground Broken,” 1.


“Pure Religion,” 15.

“Pure Religion,” 15. As Blumhofer notes, the food baskets provided to relief-seekers also added an inducement to Christian faith, their contents including “Foursquare literature and a New Testament.” (Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 348.)


85 “Foursquare City Sisters,” 1.
86 “Foursquare City Sisters,” 1.
88 “City Sisters Send Out,” 1.
90 Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 35-36. As Sutton writes, the Temple’s membership consisted of people from a variety of class backgrounds and occupations, but “the congregation generally came from the working and middle classes.”
95 quoted in, “Pure Religion,” 15.
96 quoted in, “Pure Religion,” 15.
98 McPherson’s acquaintance with suffering was, no doubt, well known among her followers. She peppered her writings and sermons with multiple stories recounting, among other things, the joys and sorrows of her first marriage, her multiple experiences with illness, her suffering of a nervous breakdown, and her loneliness as a woman engaged in active, itinerate ministry. She added to her list of sorrows a second divorce in March 1934 from her third husband, David Hutton, whom she had married in September 1931 (Blumhoffer, 341).
99 Aimee Semple McPherson, “Give Thanks Unto the Lord for the Abundance of Blessings That He Has Showered Upon Us All During the Past Year: Rejoice in Him!,” *Foursquare Crusader*, November 18, 1931, 3.
100 Kennedy, 163.
101 Kennedy, 163.
102 Kennedy, 163-64.
103 Kennedy, 164.
104 quoted in, Kennedy, 90.
105 Kennedy, 144.
106 Kennedy, 170, 172.
107 Kennedy, 171.
108 Kennedy, 160.
As confident as she was in her extension of invitation to all, McPherson paid significant financial costs for her generous strategy. As Blumhofer writes, in the mid-1930s demand for aid greatly exceeded the commissary’s supply. The resulting financial imbalance pitched the Angeles Temple into severe debt. To remedy the situation, McPherson appointed Reverend Giles Knight as the Temple’s business manager and gave him full authority to act. However, this change in leadership alienated many of McPherson’s long-time partners, including her daughter Roberta Semple. Nevertheless, Knight managed to lead the church out of debt in 1938. McPherson and the ICFG’s leaders marked the occasion with a spectacular ceremony conducted on the Temple’s dome wherein McPherson, her son Rolf, and Knight “stood beside the rotating cross, illuminated by giant spotlights” and burned over $66,000 worth of debt notes. (Blumhofer, Aimee Semple McPherson, 349-50.)


Evangelist Aiding Thousands,” 2.


McPherson, “To Be A Servant,” 3.

McPherson, “To Be A Servant,” 3.

Kennedy, 189.

Kennedy, 215.

Kennedy, 215-16.

Kennedy, 215-16.

Kennedy, 224.

quoted in, Kennedy, 247.

Kennedy, 221.

Kennedy, 221.

Kennedy, 223.

Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 330. See Marsen’s *Fundamentalism in American Culture* for a complete discussion of the causes of Fundamentalism’s decline in public prominence after the conclusion of Scopes Trial, as well as for an analysis of the changing shape of the fundamentalist movement’s pattern of public influence in the late-1920s and 1930s (Marsden, 184-95).


Kennedy, 223.


McPherson, “America Awake!,” 3.


McPherson, “America Awake!,” 3.

As Sutton notes, throughout the 1920s, McPherson supported several of the most prominent Los Angeles labor unions. She was even honored after her death in 1944 by the Los Angeles Central Labor Council for her “prolabor work.” Just the same, her general advocacy on behalf of the interests of working class people did not prevent her from making the bold accusation that the violence and destruction of property increasingly associated with labor strikes were signs of communist infiltration. (Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 218.)
As Sutton notes, among the many Sinclair opponents no doubt represented at the rally were Republican party leaders, heads of local industries (such as the Hollywood movie studios and many newspaper presses), bankers, prominent public officials, and leading members of the clergy (Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 225-28). Sutton adds that religion provided a significant argumentative resource for opponents to Sinclair’s candidacy. In *The Prophets of Religion*, Sinclair had penned “a scathing critique of alleged widespread corruption and financial mismanagement in many of the nation’s religious institutions” (Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 226). Out of their reading of this work, Sinclair’s opponents depicted him as not only wanting to overthrow capitalist and government institutions, but also the institutions of the church. Thus Sinclair’s impulse toward religious reform gave credence to rumors that he was not only an avowed Communist but also an atheist (Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 226-27).

McPherson opposed EPIC despite her previous willingness to entertain similar solutions to California’s pressing economic problems. For instance, she had previously allowed Frances Townsend to speak at Angelus Temple on the topic of old-age pensions. Additionally, in 1932, she drafted her own proposal for using government land to build Foursquare-run cooperatives which would house the unemployed. For all that, Sutton argues, Sinclair’s “secular approach” most likely proved untenable to church leaders like McPherson who, as of 1934, still seemed at least somewhat sympathetic to reform visions which embraced communitarianism and wealth sharing (Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson*, 228-29).


It should be noted that McPherson’s writings during this period also continued to reference the themes of upbeat welcome and inclusivity which had marked her 1920s and early-1930s leadership of the Temple commissary. See, for example, Aimee Semple McPherson, “Stop Beatin’ ‘Round the Mulberry Bush,” *Foursquare Crusader*, October 12, 1938. Even so, throughout the mid- to late-1930s, these arguments were overshadowed in both number and intensity by McPherson’s exhortations to embrace “Americanism” as the means for ushering in social stability and economic recovery.

McPherson envisioned Christian service of the sort she modeled as necessary for restoring local sources of state authority, as well as those which operated on the national level. For instance, in a February 1938 *Foursquare Crusader* article titled, “National Circles Should Embrace Divine Power,” she argued that local authorities “lack power to combat the mighty forces of evil” because “they are trying to do so with their own human power.” She exhorted “city officials” to embrace the form of passionate Christianity she advocated as a “torch of power” which might inspire state and national leaders, even as it helped rid the city of “murders,” “sickness,” “depression, starvation, strikes and wars.” (Aimee Semple McPherson, “National Circles Should Embrace Divine Power,” *Foursquare Crusader*, February 28, 1938, 1.)

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193 It should be noted that McPherson’s writings during this period also continued to reference the themes of upbeat welcome and inclusivity which had marked her 1920s and early-1930s leadership of the Temple commissary. See, for example, Aimee Semple McPherson, “Stop Beatin’ ‘Round the Mulberry Bush,” *Foursquare Crusader*, October 12, 1938. Even so, throughout the mid- to late-1930s, these arguments were overshadowed in both number and intensity by McPherson’s exhortations to embrace “Americanism” as the means for ushering in social stability and economic recovery.
200 McPherson envisioned Christian service of the sort she modeled as necessary for restoring local sources of state authority, as well as those which operated on the national level. For instance, in a February 1938 *Foursquare Crusader* article titled, “National Circles Should Embrace Divine Power,” she argued that local authorities “lack power to combat the mighty forces of evil” because “they are trying to do so with their own human power.” She exhorted “city officials” to embrace the form of passionate Christianity she advocated as a “torch of power” which might inspire state and national leaders, even as it helped rid the city of “murders,” “sickness,” “depression, starvation, strikes and wars.” (Aimee Semple McPherson, “National Circles Should Embrace Divine Power,” *Foursquare Crusader*, February 28, 1938, 1.)
204 McPherson, “God Bless America!,” 3.
205 McPherson, “God Bless America!,” 3.
206 McPherson, “God Bless America!,” 3.
CHAPTER 4:
DOROTHY DAY AND CATHOLIC PERSONALISM AS “MOTHERLY” SOCIAL CHANGE

On May 1, 1933 Dorothy Day and a small band of companions distributed the first issue of the Catholic Worker into a mounting swirl of economic and political crisis. The Depression had proved devastating to Americans, sweeping away the wealth of the rich and the savings of workers. The Roosevelt administration had begun to implement the New Deal. Nonetheless unemployment rates continued to soar, reaching a staggering thirty percent in 1932.¹ Widespread poverty left hundreds of people wandering the streets, seeking jobs, handouts, anything to stay afloat.² As Nancy Roberts writes, Day’s choice of a 50,000 person May Day rally in New York City’s Union Square for the Catholic Worker’s debut situated the newspaper within the context of political upheaval. The surging crowd Day entered that day with three young men commissioned by a priest to help her was filled with Communists and Socialists pressing for social, economic, and political revolution.³ The Catholic Worker, a newly minted penny press, met this revolutionary energy with a message to the unemployed, the homeless, and the destitute announcing that, in Day’s words, “the Catholic Church has a social program.”⁴

The “social program” Day announced that day gained texture, shape, and momentum in Day’s Catholic Worker writings in the following years. “People are becoming conscious of the inequalities of the social system and are awakening to their responsibility toward their neighbor,” she wrote in the July-August 1933 issue of Catholic Worker.⁵ Day guided readers to take
concrete steps to apply the Church’s teachings, such as sacrificing one meal a week (“or, not even one meal, but one afternoon tea”!) and donating the money saved to charity. Such simple acts, she argued, promised to right the over-turned economy not through clever public policies but through the spread of Christian love. “Of course,” she stated, “in this we are going against the NRA, which calls for faith and more buying. Why not faith and more charity—that is, giving to the poor to enable them to buy?” With exhortations like these, Day pointed to personal sacrifice and the extension of hospitality to a suffering neighbor as the best means for realizing not only economic recovery but also radical social change.

Yet with the program she proposed, Day established more than a vision for applying Catholic social teachings to a modern economic and social crisis. She also articulated a new basis for religious women’s authority in the humanitarian sphere, namely the potential for what she articulated as a “motherly” approach to social reform: personal sacrifice, direct care for the needy, and hospitality. Through her editorial leadership of the Catholic Worker, Day brought this gendered religiosity to bear on trends toward industrialization and individualism associated with the early-twentieth-century modern era. These she aimed to challenge by modeling and encouraging devotional practices such as works of mercy, voluntary poverty, hospitality to the poor and the laborer, and pacifism, each of these inspired by Catholic social thought. In the pages of the Catholic Worker, she called attention to two papal encyclicals, Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 Rerum Novarum (On Capital and Labor) and Pope Pius XI’s 1931 Quadragesimo Anno (On the Reconstruction of the Social Order), core documents within the Church’s collection of social teachings which framed the Vatican’s public advocacy on behalf of human dignity, the worth of laborers, and organized Christian charity. As Fred Boehrer writes, Day buttressed these encyclicals’ calls to serve the poor by encouraging readers to take “personal responsibility
for the other person in need, instead of shirking it off to someone else or to an impersonal institution.” She thus combined the papal encyclicals’ “program of social justice” and “personalist” philosophy in order to argue for the viability of a new approach to social reform.

Her vision for creating modern social reform strategies in line with Catholic tradition emphasized personal sacrifice and the extension of domestic hospitality in ways which marked as feminine acts of compassion, charity, and concrete care for the suffering and then posited the influence of these practices as essential to the advance of radical social change.

Day’s promotion of both Catholic social teachings and personalism provided an underlying ideological basis for the Catholic Worker, the emerging social movement which grew out of Day and Catholic Worker co-founder Peter Maurin’s desire to apply Catholic personalism to 1930s economic and social crises. According to Paul Hanly Furfey, a priest who, along with fellow priest Virgil Michel, helped put Catholic Worker philosophy into writing, personalism was a philosophy meant to inspire Christian love among those who participated in the “Mystical Body,” the empowered community of Christ’s Church brought together through spiritual grace. As Furfey explained, “personalist action” differed from “extreme political action” of the sort which considered spiritual influence extraneous to other strategies of social influence.

Personalist action, he argued, with its tendency to seek social reform through “gentle” changes leading to the public’s “internal acceptance” of social change, needed to be deliberately chosen over other more forceful (and even sometimes violent) tactics used by social activists to engender radical political change. In her 1930s Catholic Worker writings, Day invoked personalism as a strategy for building faith communities and personal relationships between charity workers and the destitute peoples they served. Personalism became the platform for her to “gently” promote social change through actions she offered as motherly. In this sense, her
application of personalism to the crisis of the Great Depression attempted to make out of the uniquely feminine mode of humanitarian influence she invented a new approach to modern social reform based in Catholic social thought.

Day attempted to show how personal sacrifice and hospitality might prove effective in promoting the modern ideals of equality and social justice. She fused the philosophy of personalism with what she marked as characteristics of motherhood to transcend and even efface social inequalities. As Day argued, motherly acts of hospitality and personal sacrifice would encourage the welcoming of differences rather than their exclusion from mainstream American society. Day thus offered her approach to motherly care as a means of radically altering existing government, economic structures, and even established social logics. The new social logic she advocated extolled a “different” way for caring for the poor and the suffering, one that challenged the modern notion that the embrace of scientism and statism in the humanitarian sphere was all that was needed to bring about social equality. On the contrary, Day argued that the spread of radical Catholic personalism through sacrifice and hospitality was the only viable way to accomplish this essential modern goal. Her rhetorical invention of religious women’s authority in the humanitarian sphere in this sense crafted a radical approach to modern social reform in addition to a means for bringing religious women’s influence to bear on the project of crafting a new social order.

In this chapter, I argue that Day articulated a humanitarian rhetoric which promoted motherly personalism, based in Catholic social teachings, as the best means for both resolving the crisis of the Great Depression and realizing the modern ideals of equality and social justice. To advance this line of analysis, I first trace how Day’s advance of a motherly approach to social
reform helped her emerge in the 1930s as a significant woman religious leader poised to challenge the application of scientism and statism to modern social reform contexts. I then examine how Day incorporated her rhetorical advocacy for motherly personalism into her Catholic Worker writings promoting three core principles within Catholic social teachings: human dignity, the worth of laborers, and the necessity of organized Catholic action. In all of this, Day posited motherly sacrifice and hospitality as not just a response to economic crisis but also as a way to advance radical social change within the context of early-twentieth-century modernity.

A “Tearful Prayer” and a New Vocation: Dorothy Day’s 1930s Emergence as Radical Woman Religious Leader

Dorothy Day’s 1930s entrée as a radical Catholic leader was as dramatic as had been her conversion to the Catholic faith. She was baptized and welcomed into the Roman Catholic Church on December 18, 1927 at the age of 30. In her autobiography, The Long Loneliness, Day claimed that it was the birth of her daughter (née Tamar Teresa Batterham) which had “made her do something definite” with regard to religious faith. In this, Day’s conversion to Catholicism signaled her hopes as a parent, even as it paid heed to the disorderliness of her early life and her expressed longings to find purposeful direction.

As Mel Piehl writes, Dorothy Day had penchants for reading, religion, and “experience” which were expressed early in her life through a deep concern for social issues. Day’s interests were so strong that, by the time she arrived in New York City in her early 20s, she was already primed to become part of a burgeoning Greenwich Village collection of young American
intellectuals starting to “experiment in radical politics, culture, and personal behavior.”\textsuperscript{18} One of Day’s first jobs in New York was as a reporter for the \textit{New York Call}, a Socialist daily. This early work put her into contact with a set of academic and literary radicals.\textsuperscript{19} Before and during World War I, the New York City network Day circulated in proved an excellent outlet for her growing desire to pursue social justice through both intellectual and political means. For all her connections and drive, though, a series of personal disappointments and tragedies (which included a romantic relationship with newspaper man Louis Moise which proved traumatic, an abortion, a failed marriage, and her witness of a friend’s death from a drug overdose) beset Day after the war ended and cast a darker frame over her life in New York. As the 1920s came to a close, she rallied from these shadows, finding contentment in a romantic relationship with Forester Batterham, a man whom she met through her New York radical social set and who later became her common-law husband and father to Tamar.\textsuperscript{20}

Day’s domestic situation failed to remain peaceful for long. Tamar’s birth presented an exigency for Day, her wish to have the child baptized strongly resisted by Batterham who viewed Catholicism as an antiquated and destructive institution. Batterham objected to Day’s growing interest in Catholic faith, an interest sparked in childhood but fully ignited with Tamar’s birth. Out of the conflict with Batterham, she turned to Catholic thought for resolution. In the \textit{Long Loneliness}, she stated how she realized that in the Church she could find a new way of life for her and Tamar, one not attainable through the radical communities of which she had been a part.\textsuperscript{21} Not surprisingly, Day’s growing interest in Catholicism precipitated the end of her relationship with Batterham. Yet even that ending failed to fully resolve tensions “between her old life as a radical social activist and her new one as a Catholic traditionalist devoted to social justice.”\textsuperscript{22} Day’s conversion prompted her to turn from her New York circle of friends, but her
initial experiences as a Catholic reminded her that she felt “like a hypocrite” for valuing an institution which she had once considered “an opiate of the people.”

Nevertheless, Day’s interest in Catholicism continued and was made stronger by the Church’s stated interest in aiding the poor—America’s workers, its immigrants, and its socially marginalized. The question as to how to reconcile the political commitments of her past with her newly embraced religious devotion hung in the air; it was a question that, in May 1932, inspired in Day a “tearful prayer” for a new, Catholic vocation. The question and the prayer were answered when, a short time later, Peter Maurin, a French Catholic layman with a fervor for social reform, showed up at the new convert’s doorstep. Maurin engaged Day with a “pedagogical program” that encompassed “God, the Church, the Church Fathers, the saints, the poor, hospitality, liberalism, capitalism, fascism, communism, personalism, distributism, anarchism, Aquinas, Catherine of Siena, Chesterton, Belloc, Maritain, Berdyaev, Kropotkin, and so on.” His regular sessions of “indoctrination” helped Day learn how to be devoted to the Church, even, as Robert Coles writes, she continued to see it as “terribly compromised, flawed, even betrayed outright by high-living, self-important officials.” The synergy which bubbled out of Maurin and Day’s 1932 conversations became the basis for their 1933 co-founding of the Catholic Worker. The partnership that began with the release of a penny press later gave rise to a social movement which, at its apogee in 1939, realized a vision for personalist, anarchist, and Catholic social reform through the creation of “houses of hospitality,” Catholic study groups, and communal farms in New York and across the nation. In all of this, as Mark Massa notes, the “glue” that held the movement together and helped sustain the public’s interest remained its monthly newspaper, that publication firmly guided by its editor-in-chief—Dorothy Day.
Through her writings for the *Catholic Worker*, Day attempted to mitigate the apparent incongruity between the dogmatic form of the papal encyclicals, texts whose circulation in America in the 1930s remained limited to elite Catholic lay leaders, and the concrete circumstances of suffering wrought by the Great Depression.\(^3\) She interpreted Catholic social teachings as laying the groundwork for a radical approach to social reform rooted in Catholic anarchism.\(^3\) Even so, Day’s writings constituted more than a call to radical Catholicism. They also posited a distinctly feminine mode of religiosity as essential to radical social change.

In her *Catholic Worker* texts, Day suggested Catholic personalism as fully realized through what she characterized as motherly practices of personal care and sacrifice, done on behalf of the socially marginalized and suffering. In this, she combined her personal experience of motherhood with the idea of the Church as the “Mother” of humanity, responsible for the care of its most needy. Day’s motherly personalism encompassed a core principle in Catholic social teachings which posited the Church’s impetus for charity as maternal, here expressed in Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum*:

\[
\text{Nay, to spare them the shame of begging, the common Mother of rich and poor has exerted herself to gather together funds for the support of the needy. The Church has stirred up everywhere the heroism of charity, and has established Congregations of Religious and many other useful institutions for help and mercy, so that there might be hardly any kind of suffering which was not visited and relieved.} \quad ^3
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Day’s proposed model for caring for those suffering during the Great Depression constituted a call for others to follow her example of motherhood, as well as Catholic social teachings’ exhortation for the Church as “Mother” to work diligently on behalf of the poor. Through
motherly personalism, she argued, the Church might bring social justice and order to an American economy and society distorted in ways that multiplied rather than relieved human need.

Thus Day posited the motherly “way” of care, sacrifice, and hospitality she illustrated in her writings as the best, and perhaps the only, means for permanently repairing economic and social systems decimated by the Great Depression. Day’s monthly columns proved a particularly useful forum for her to frame Catholic social teachings as powerfully advanced when translated into the motherly practices she modeled. Her column, which she once described as “the odds and ends of things that happen around the Catholic Worker,” in fact illustrated the ways in which her readers, men and women alike, could follow her lead in demonstrating the powerful impact of motherly sacrifice and hospitality—or, as she put it, how her readers could, “Just take the Gospels, a newspaper, the Papal encyclicals and get to work.”

Through motherly personalism, Day emerged as a leader who interpreted Catholic social teachings not merely to endorse modern trends in the humanitarian sphere but in order to create an approach to modern social reform capable of transforming the fabric of American social life.

Catholic Charities and the Rise of Modern Scientism and Statism

Day’s combination of Catholic social teachings, personalism, and a motherly approach to modern social reform went against the grain of early-twentieth-century trends among American Catholics increasingly willing to view scientific efficiency and cooperation with the expanding U.S. welfare state as the best means for shaping the Church’s vast network of organized charities. While Day challenged the prioritizing of efficient benevolence distribution over the
more cumbersome goal of providing personal care for individual suffers and the relegation of responsibility for the poor to the state rather than to the Mystical Body of Christ, the 1930s Catholic Church appeared more and more inclined to follow modern trends toward scientism and statism. As Mary Oates writes, as early as the mid-nineteenth-century, leaders within the American Church’s hierarchy had begun calling for increased standards of efficiency to be applied among those “members of religious orders (most of them women)” charged with running Catholic charities. Both clergy and laity agreed that Catholic sisters, the Church’s primary charity workers, needed to be equipped to operate institutions that could “care for relatively large numbers of persons at one time.” This turn to efficiency culminated in the early-twentieth-century emergence of a Church reform movement pressing for the embrace of “scientific charity.” Catholic charities, this movement’s leaders argued, needed to reject the practice of “simply providing relief” and concentrate instead on developing programs designed to address “grave systemic social problems.” Reforms from this era introduced a “new bureaucratic structure” called the “diocesan charitable bureau” which gave leaders within the Church hierarchy more centralized control over charitable institutions. According to Oates, charity bureaus increased in popularity throughout the 1920s and 30s. Yet as they flourished, Catholic sisters were increasingly pressured to spend more time teaching and studying professional social work and less time “visiting the poor and sick in their homes.” Leaders within newly minted diocesan bureaus appeared eager to “meet the highest standards” of professional training required for “employment in public and private social agencies,” even though this move precipitated the marginalization of lay volunteers and the rising dominance of paid social workers within the Church’s charitable institutions.
The Church hierarchy’s decision to consolidate control over Catholic charities also precipitated the creation of national organizations designed to “present a cohesive ‘Catholic position’ in public debates about social priorities, welfare policies, and reform legislation.”

In the 1910s, the National Conference of Catholic Charities and the National Catholic War Council (renamed in 1923 as the National Catholic Welfare Council) were each established in order to enable Church leaders to influence public policy in just this way. The NCCC (now called Catholic Charities USA) provided an outlet for “diocesan charity officials and social workers, clergy and lay” to lobby on behalf of Catholic institutions. Similarly, the NCWC served to organize those American Catholic bishops taking an active role in advancing social reform.

With the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s, Church leaders became even more interested in influencing public social reform policies. As Oates writes, during that era, the majority of Catholics “lived in or near major urban centers” and were thus among the “hardest hit by sustained unemployment.” The extremity of the economic crisis put a severe strain on Catholic charities’ resources to the point where Church leaders recognized that, if the incoming avalanche of needs were to be met, Catholics would need to cooperate with government agencies. Oates suggests that plans to cooperate with state agencies were initially welcomed by most Catholics. However, the decision to allow Catholic charities to receive public funds came with the requirement that these institutions comply with “externally imposed eligibility criteria and standards,” a move which led diocesan charitable bureaus to replace most of their volunteer workers with “paid professional social workers” hired to ensure conformity to state requirements.

Many leaders of Catholic charities continued to defend the Church’s particular approach to serving and caring for the poor and workers. According to Dorothy Brown and Elizabeth McKeown, as the Roosevelt Administration began to institute the New Deal, Catholic
activists waged several “campaigns” meant to press the state to extend relief to Catholics in ways not constraining to either recipients’ or agency workers’ Catholic beliefs. The first campaign, staged just after the implementation of the New Deal, argued for Catholic charities as necessary to the process of distributing government relief to Catholics in particular. Another staged in the mid-1930s argued for provisions to be added to Aid to Dependent Children and Child Welfare Services which would “protect the religion of Catholic children,” and still another in the late 1930s called for legislation which would ensure that “Catholic children and families” were cared for and that “the rights of all Americans to an adequate subsistence were protected.” As O’Brien notes, despite such campaigning, support for the New Deal, which started out strong among Catholics, eventually fractured. Supporters of a substantial partnership between Catholic charities and the state emphasized the importance of government benevolence to the goal of achieving “at least partial practical realization” of the Church’s values for charity, service, and care for society’s least, while opponents, like Dorothy Day, continued to question the New Deal, and with it the seeming ease of reconciling the state’s social reform agenda with Catholic social teachings.

Day’s efforts to illustrate the motherly “way” of personalism within the context of her Catholic Worker writings elucidated a particular point of disagreement between Catholics who welcomed cooperation with the U.S. welfare state and those who resisted it, namely the question as to whether America’s established institutions, including its government, required reform or complete dismantling. For her part, Day did collaborate with Catholics, such as Monsignor John Ryan, who was the founder of the “Bishops’ Program of Social Reconstruction” and the NCWC and who also expressed strong willingness to back state-based reform initiatives. Day and Ryan shared a common interest in applying Catholic social teachings to modern social
reform contexts. Still, despite areas of agreement, Day did not share Ryan’s goal of forging a U.S. welfare state that incorporated the principles of Catholic social teachings. Instead, she suggested that close partnership between Catholic charitable institutions and the state equated to endorsement of the capitalist system. She, in fact, rejected the notion that state-based materialism, whether capitalist, socialist, or Communist, posed a viable solution to the crisis of the Great Depression. In order to come up with an effective response to modernity’s collapse, she argued, Americans, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, needed to embrace and actively pursue her vision for promoting motherly personalism, or, to state it more specifically, acts of personal sacrifice and the extension of hospitality in response to those suffering the grim effects of the Depression.

In the next section, I examine Day’s rhetorical advocacy for motherly personalism as a response to America’s experience of social and economic crises in the 1930s. I argue that her articulation of the principle of human dignity posited personal attention to and love for those who were suffering as markedly motherly practices capable of achieving the goal of modern equality and capable also of exposing the limitations of modern social reform strategies which relied exclusively on the development of scientism and statism within the humanitarian sphere.

“All the Children of a Common Father”: Human Dignity in Day’s Motherly Approach to Modern Social Reform

As Charles Curran notes, late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Catholic social teachings were based in “two fundamental anthropological principles: the dignity or sacredness of the human person and the social nature of the person.”49 Human dignity, these Church texts
declared, reflects the natural order, an order established by God as the Creator of human persons. Both Leo XIII’s 1891 *Rerum Novarum* (*RN*) and Pius XI’s 1931 *Quadragesimo Anno* (*QA*) based their advocacy on behalf of social reform and the pursuit of social justice on the premise of human dignity. As Leo XIII stated, God endowed human creatures with “the full perfection of animal nature” but also with reason, “which is the chief thing in us who are human beings.”\textsuperscript{50} The “end and object” of the institutions which order society and the economy, explained Pius XI, is entailed in the ability of the human individual to live “in society” and “under an authority ordained by God” in such a way that “he may develop and evolve to the full all his faculties to the praise and glory of his Creator” and that “by fulfilling faithfully the duties of his station, he may attain to temporal and eternal happiness.”\textsuperscript{51}

As Leo XIII wrote in the opening paragraph of *RN*, however, human fulfillment was being threatened by “the growth of industry, and the surprising discoveries of science; the changed relations of masters and workmen; the enormous fortunes of individuals and the poverty of the masses; the increased self-reliance and the closer mutual combination of the working population; and, finally, a general moral deterioration.”\textsuperscript{52} Industrial and technological advancements, he argued, had obscured human dignity as the purpose of human existence. The Church needed to answer this ominous trend by reasserting human dignity as a core principle in Catholic thought essential to the reestablishment of world order.

In her *Catholic Worker* writings, Dorothy Day amplified these papal encyclicals’ calls for human dignity, suggesting this principle as important to the ongoing operations of 1930s public and private benevolence institutions. The public’s embrace of the notion of human dignity would, she suggested, inspire the development of more effective means of caring for those left
economically bereft and socially marginalized on account of the Depression. Day juxtaposed Leo XIII’s and Pius XI’s emphasis on human dignity with modern emphases on scientism and statism in the humanitarian sphere. The principle of human dignity, she argued, demanded the development of modern social reform strategies which would uphold the worth of individuals, no matter how apparently “worthless” in the material sense they were. The objective standards of scientific efficiency and the necessarily large scale of state-run benevolence systems, she suggested, proved inadequate in the pursuit of this task. Day proposed to replace these standards with the principle of human dignity as an outworking of Catholic Worker personalism, human dignity providing a better means for caring for the needy. This call to personalism included exhortation to what she indicted as motherly practices which took the form of personal care for and personal sacrifice on behalf of the suffering. Her advocacy on behalf of human dignity posited her particular approach to personalism as holding the potential to bring about the modern ideal of equality, an outcome much different from the re-inscribed social and economic hierarchies seemingly inherent to modern benevolence systems.

Toward this end, Day’s Catholic Worker writings drew a contrast between the standards scientific efficiency within the humanitarian sphere and the papal encyclicals’ call for human dignity. For instance, in a column from the first issue of the Catholic Worker, Day commented sarcastically how some might think that a man recently laid off by Bell Telephone Company might not have it “so bad” since “he can study and apply to himself some of the budgets prepared by the charities’ organizations, telling how a working class family can feed itself on five dollars a week.” With these words, she challenged the “scientific” methods used by charities to determine the material needs of poor families. The budgets of charity organizations, she implied, were better used as tools to convince the unemployed that their misery could be managed than as
means for ensuring their proper care. Day indicated, too, how state-run benevolence agencies appeared similarly lacking in their ability to promote human dignity. For instance, in a passage from a September 1935 column, she poignantly described interactions observed between public welfare workers and the recipients of aid. “There is a strange contrast,” she observed, “between the impassive faces of the investigators and the twisted anguished faces of those investigated.”

With words like these, Day suggested that the required efficiency and scale of modern public and private benevolence organizations designed to suit the standards imposed by scientism undermined in a significant sense the dignity of the very people they were tasked to help.

In a July-August 1935 installment of “Day After Day, she made a similar point but in this instance used a particularly vulnerable woman as an illustrative example. The column recounted observing a woman with a baby who came to a New York Home Relief Bureau to “ask why her rent had not been paid” but was “refused admittance and told to leave her baby at home next time, with her husband, perhaps.” Further pressing from the bureau staff revealed that the woman, who spoke English only poorly, did not have a husband. Day described the embarrassing scene with excruciating detail, noting the comments of those who witnessed the scene: “And where did the baby come from, they jeered as she was forced to leave.” As recounted in Day’s writings, the woman’s experience further exposed the limits to a large benevolence organization’s capacity to accommodate an individual’s need for compassion and discretion, in short her need for human dignity. On top of that, Day’s illustration also posited the sort of mother personalism she promoted as providing a superior point of insight from which to treat the problems of the poor. As the column implied, Day’s experience as a mother gave her the ability to recognize in the woman’s plight her exigent need for not just for material relief but also dignity. As a single mother herself, Day recognized the needs of another single mother
whose circumstances had put her at the mercy of the state but who needed so much more than the state appeared willing to offer toward the relief of her distress.

Day’s writings in these ways called attention to the fading value of human dignity within the humanitarian sphere and contrasted that trend with the potentialities for motherly personalism to improve modern social reform. In a November 1933 installment of “Day After Day,” for instance, she recalled a train of thought which came to her after a perspicacious reading of a “news” item from the local paper:

A deer gets trapped on a hillside and every effort is brought to bear to rescue him from his predicament. The newspapers carry daily features. Mrs. A with her four children and unemployed husband living on $1.50 a week, is trapped by economic circumstance and everyone is so indifferent that it took three or four afternoons of Mike Gunn’s time to see to it that the Home Relief came to the rescue.  

From her reading of the paper, Day compared two different crises in a way which evoked disbelief—a trapped animal on a remote hillside outside of the city conjured more sympathy than a trapped mother of four financially responsible for supporting her household and needfully reliant on the less than reliable care of the local Home Relief office. Day offered a perspective which cast Mrs. A as the proper object of sympathy, a mother worth “three or four afternoons” of another person’s time spent to secure care for her and her children. Her description of Mrs. A’s plight implied the shocking inability of the state to recognize the needs of a fellow human creature, despite state agencies’ ostensible commitment to providing efficient, comprehensive care. It took the influence of Day’s model of personalism, which properly recognized how untenable to the woman’s situation was, to inspire an adequate response from the public. Further, Day hinted at the ugly (though perhaps commonly held) notion that poor humans were
worth less than animals. If the public found it easier and more inspiring to rescue a suffering deer than to extend care to a mother and her family, she argued, than a better approach to modern social reform was needed. Again, her personal “witness” of the two news stories implied an approach to social reform which offered better insight into the needs of the suffering than that afforded by modern scientism or statism.

To contrast the trend toward scientism and statism in the humanitarian sphere, Day posited motherly personalism as emphasizing human dignity in a way less efficient but more effective in terms of its inspiration of concrete care for the poor. In a November 1939 column, for example, she responded to a complaint by Catholic Worker subscribers that “they receive the paper irregularly.” She made no apology for the inefficiency but reminded Catholic Worker “friends” that the labor which helped circulate the paper’s 130,000 copies was entirely volunteer, recruited from the collection of people gathered around the St. Joseph House of Hospitality. Day wrote in lieu of apology:

All the addressing is by hand—in consideration of the need of human beings amongst us for work, we don’t look to the addressograph to make the work lighter. Many men and women have been brought back to a sense of their own dignity and usefulness, but the work they can do to help us. In the long run, we consider our method of using hands instead of machines, a more profitable and productive way.

With these words, Day defined the product her operation aspired to create as human nurture, rather than an efficiently written and delivered paper. In this way, she replaced the driving value for materials with a zealous desire to invest in people. To use her words, she preferred “hands” to “machines,” volunteers to purchased mechanisms. Day’s reasoning harkened back to the
tradition within social reform contexts of mobilizing volunteers rather than professionals. If modern machinery could not achieve the aims of human dignity, she argued, the adoption of a “hands” approach was called for, this strategy carrying with it a moral authority won from effectiveness which remained relevant even in an early-twentieth-century modern context.

Day’s model of personalism attempted to motivate her readers to value human dignity more than the pursuit of efficiency, and to take personal responsibility for upholding the dignity of those suffering during the Depression, rather than leaving that task to agents of the state who, she claimed, were often inclined to disregard it. For example, in an August 1937 column, Day described how, at a Catholic Worker House of Hospitality breadline, a crowd of hundreds of “the lame, the halt, the blind,” “the unemployed,” and “the unemployable” gathered to receive food and coffee. “From all over,” she wrote, “men drift into New York for work or for food,” some finding a measure of hospitality but many remaining “forgotten men.” All of the forgotten, she implied, would be received at the Catholic Worker, if nowhere else. To those who might question the effectiveness of such a strategy, she responded with a rebuke of what she called the “atheist attitude” that breadlines proved ineffectual as a source of relief for the chronically unemployed or the “unworthy poor.” “You can’t do anything with them, so why feed them?,” she queried in the voice of her imagined critics.

The answer to the question of “why feed them,” she instructed her readers, could be found in the Gospel’s command that “we must see Christ in each man who comes to us.” Day went on to tie her description of the Catholic Worker breadline to another scene—the Biblical story from Luke’s gospel of the poor man Lazarus nursing his sores and sitting at a rich man’s gate. Day compared the well-known story of the rich man who ignored Lazarus to “the modern
social worker” who would “wonder why [Lazarus] didn’t go to the clinic to get fixed up and rehabilitated.” Day wove together the two scenes—one Biblical and one contemporary—in order to interpret the Gospel’s moral command for those who claimed to work on behalf of the needy. The modern social worker, she argued, although in a position to help, blamed the poor man for his plight rather than taking personal responsibility for his care. The social worker who operated within the state’s benevolence system negatively illustrated the Gospel’s command to bestow human dignity on “forgotten men” like Lazarus. On the other hand, Day portrayed the Catholic Worker as a counter-type of the rich man from Jesus’ story, one who honored human dignity by willingly relinquishing wealth for the sake of another. With this line of reasoning, she challenged the moral authority of the social worker as an agent of the state, while simultaneously asserting the superior moral vantage point of Catholic Worker personalism.

In the same column, Day went further to demonstrate personalism as influencing more significant social change than afforded by scientism or statism. She wrote: “We cut down our paper this month to four pages because we cannot pay the printing bill, but people are more important than papers.” “People are more important than papers” constituted a concrete application of the principle of human dignity to the crisis of the Depression. Again, to those who questioned the expenditure of so many valuable resources on behalf of New York City’s unemployed and unemployable, Day responded by implying her own perspicacious question: How much should one feed any child of God? Included in her response was the query: What would a good parent do? Day provided an answer using the logic of a caring mother rather than what she saw as an impersonal and limited state. It made no sense, she reasoned, to even ask that question. Of course, she implied, as any mother knows, you need to feed a hungry child. To emphasize the point, Day situated the Catholic Worker’s breadline within the context of Leo
XIII’s words in RN expressing the Church’s value for human dignity over material things, for feeding God’s children over avoiding the “waste” of resources: “It is the soul which is made after the image and likeness of God; it is in the soul that sovereignty resides, in virtue of which man is commanded to rule the creatures below him, and to use all the earth and ocean for his profit and advantage.” Her column modeled for readers a way to put Leo XIII’s words into practice by showing them that the very pages of the Catholic Worker were merely “things” only worth something when used to benefit God’s children. In this sense, Day added personal sacrifice as a part of personalism’s call for the motherly care of the suffering, this sacrifice on behalf of “forgotten men” imitating the sovereign care of a loving God for his children. In all of this, Day illustrated that, although her example of motherly personalism fell short of state standards for efficiency, it proved more effective as a source for social change given its ability to lead the public to embrace the higher moral standards of the Church’s teaching on human dignity.

Day thus illustrated how motherly personalism might simultaneously become a way to apply the principles of Catholic social teachings and a modern approach to correcting the inadequacies of scientism and statism. In a September 1933 column, Day penned a narrative which made her arguments justifying her mode of personalism as applicable to the practice of modern humanitarianism clear through a comparison of the Catholic Worker’s treatment of a woman about to be evicted from her home to that of the state. As she recounted, a small group of Catholic Workers arrived at “Mrs. N’s” house early in the morning, eager to beat the Marshal set to arrive at ten in the morning to “put her on the street.” Mrs. N “didn’t want her belongings exposed to the neighborhood,” and Day and her troupe were eager to spare her that indignity. Day added to her tale a note that the Unemployed Council, a branch of the Communist Party, might also arrive at the scene of Mrs. N’s eviction. Still, she explained, that
group was more “interested in making demonstrations” than in personal care and “shows up only when the furniture is on the street” and the damage to human dignity was already done.\textsuperscript{70} Day framed a scene in which the cast of characters advocating for a state-based, materialist system of government, whether Communist demonstrators or the state Marshal, were not interested in protecting Mrs. N from the shame of having her abject poverty put on public display. The Catholic Worker’s “Neighborhood Council,” she reasoned, needed to “be the first on the scene” to help Mrs. N, again given this group’s advantage of possessing insight into the suffering woman’s need for human dignity.\textsuperscript{71}

As Day’s column stated, Mrs. N was sixty-two and had lost her job as a janitress. She had, the author explained, “no chance” of finding future employment and was “all alone save for a huge cat called Rags who is so old that he is toothless.”\textsuperscript{72} For food, Day reported, Mrs. N collected “scraps from the First Avenue market, picking up stale vegetables and scraps of meat and fish heads.”\textsuperscript{73} At night, she collected rags, sometimes until the early hours of morning. With such scant income, Day wrote, Mrs. N was unable to afford public utilities like gas and electricity. To boot, she had to suffer the indignity of a visit from a Home Relief investigator who had “stopped by [Mrs. N’s] stoop for a chat.”\textsuperscript{74} Day repeated the investigator’s comments on the situation at hand: “Yes, most of the people never used gas and electric until the city was paying for it,” then adding that the investigator said this “resentfully.”\textsuperscript{75} She then recalled the equally sour attitude of one of the landlord’s agents tasked with overseeing Mrs. N’s eviction. In recounting a phone conversation wherein Day asked for more time to help Mrs. N move, she reported the agent’s response: “I don’t care if she has gone to the Home Relief. I wouldn’t take their vouchers anyway. They’re no good, you can’t cash them. Now we’ve got to dispossess the people all over again and it’s putting us to a lot of expense.”\textsuperscript{76} She recounted how she “pointed
out” to the man that he might save the cost of evicting people twice (once when they ran out of money to pay rent and once when Home Relief failed to come through with state rent support) by letting them stay temporarily until arrangement for payment could be made. She then repeated the agent’s reply: “We carried them—let someone [sic.] else do it for a while.” With these words, Day marked the apparent problem with the situation at hand. Her depiction of the scene surrounding Mrs. N’s eviction emphasized the brokenness of the state’s relief systems and the consistent unwillingness of individuals to take personal responsibility for the “expense” entailed in “carrying” suffering people. What would solve the problem, she implied, was the public’s adoption of a personalist approach which upheld the sacrifice of carrying the suffering as a sort of maternal duty, one taken up willingly and affably without regard for the expense.

Day’s column portrayed her team’s comparatively nurturing treatment of Mrs. N as a better way to care for the poor than the way demonstrated by the state. Her “Neighborhood Council,” which consisted of a few Catholic Worker volunteers willing to help, side-stepped statism but brought better results. In their efforts to deal with the off-putting comments and grumpy attitudes of others and relocate Mrs. N “with decency and dispatch” to a new apartment with a less “brutal” landlord, the little Catholic community empowered by motherly personalism proved more effective when it came to upholding human dignity than the strategies employed by Home Relief. In this sense, Day illustrated motherly personalism as more than a means for motivating acts of care on behalf of the poor. She showed her approach as creating a new mode of social change not achievable through the exercise of state-based authority.

But Day’s model of motherly personalism as an approach to modern social reform aspired to do more than simply aid the poor. It also aimed to create a new social order which
eschewed rather than reinforced the sorts of hierarchies which she understood as endemic to modern scientism and statism. In fact, Day argued that her promotion of human dignity crafted a strategy for radical social change. She offered a particularly significant illustration of how her approach to personalism held the capacity to advance this sort of fundamental change with her suggestion that the principle of human dignity entailed in Leo XIII’s and Pius XI’s social encyclicals extended beyond the institutional arrangement of the Catholic Church. For instance, in a November 1936 column, Day described an experience sitting in traffic, “idly” saying the rosary, when (“like a bright light, like a joyful thought”) she suddenly recognized the reality of her kinship to the people surrounding her—“to all the passerby, to the longshoremen idling about the corner, black and white, to the striking seamen.”79 Out of this experience, Day proclaimed, “we were all children of a common Father, all creatures of one Creator, and Catholic or Protestant, Jew or Christian, Communist or non-Communist, were bound together by this tie.”80 Since all people held the Father in common, all people retained the identity of Child of God. With this reasoning, Day posited the idea of human dignity and the call to motherly personalism as extending to all people regardless of their position within established social hierarchies. Day thus connected kindredness to God as Father (and consequentially to the Church as “Mother”) to her advocacy for the maternal practices of personal care and sacrifice. These two arguments worked in tandem in Day’s writings to frame the relief of suffering as a universal requirement available to all regardless of apparent markers of social worth.

Day expanded on the ways in which human dignity transcended even the confessional boundaries of the Catholic Church. According to her, the “fact” of humanity’s shared created purpose was the important thing, not “whether or not a man believes in Jesus Christ, His Incarnation, His Life here with us, His crucifixion and resurrection; whether or not a man
believes in God.” With these words, she suggested that the model of personalism she proposed, with its emphasis on universal membership in God’s created human family, proved a viable basis for a new social order, one which had the potential to fully realize the modern ideal of universal equality. Through her assertion of humans’ shared condition as “children of a common Father,” Day proclaimed that attainment of modernity’s lofty aims required the impetus of motherly personalism—particularly the ability to extend human dignity to the suffering. In the next section, I examine further how Day posited motherly personalism as necessary for bringing about this sort of modern social change, indicating the ways in which she framed human dignity as the starting point for the inspiration of even more radical acts of personal care and sacrifice, namely concrete hospitality offered to the least in society.

“Without a fatherhood of God, there can be no brotherhood of man”: Radical Hospitality and Motherly Personalism as the Basis for a New Social Order

Day’s promotion of the principle of radical hospitality as necessary to a new social order founds its inspiration in a second fundamental principle articulated within Leo XIII’s and Pius XI’s social encyclicals, namely the idea that social harmony could be realized only through the resolution of class conflicts. In *RN*, Leo XIII proclaimed that social hierarchies and relationships constituted a natural order. He acknowledged that significant damage to society had been caused by late-nineteenth-century industrialization trends in Western society which suppressed workers’ rights. To answer resulting increasing incidences of turn-of-the-century class conflicts, Leo XIII proposed “precepts yet more perfect” which would attempt to transform conflict into a new social order designed to “bind class to class in friendliness and good understanding.” His text formulated its response to class conflicts around the spiritual principle that each individual,
whether rich or poor, had equal importance before God. Still, he added, the natural relations between classes required active maintenance, rather than just simple assent to a theological precept, the willingness of “property owners” to treat employees with dignity playing a particularly important role in establishing social harmony.  

RN thus argued that each class had “rights and duties” which needed to be respected and maintained if perpetual conflict was to be avoided. In QA, Pius XI rearticulated RN’s commitment to maintaining social harmony but further emphasized the need for the laboring classes to be particularly “protected in the social and juridical order.” Without such protections, laboring and property owning classes would be constantly at war rather than “dependent one upon the other.” In this sense, the encyclicals articulated a clear call for the Church to make a special effort to protect laborers from advancing social injustices.

Nevertheless, as Curran argues, Leo XIII’s and Pius XI’s texts, while generally arguing for social justice on behalf of laboring classes as a requirement for the realization of a new social order based in Catholic social teachings, did not propose specific steps which ought to be taken in order to protect workers’ rights and well being. What these papal encyclicals did do was denounce the efforts of the Socialist and Communist parties to bring about social justice through ideologies which remained exclusively secular and materialist in nature. RN, for example, condemned socialist ideologies for their abolishment of private property, the right of possession having been posited as part of a divinely created natural order. QA echoed RN’s condemnation, adding that materialism in any form (whether socialist or capitalist) posed an inherent threat to natural order and that socialism in all of its forms (whether radical or moderate) remained incompatible with Church dogma. Leo XIII’s and Pius XI’s encyclicals each admitted the reality that many poor and laboring Catholics were attracted to Communist and Socialist
organizations. As Pius XI observed in _QA_, many disadvantaged Catholics believed that the Church “favor[ed] the rich and neglect[ed] the workingmen.” It was indeed a “lamentable fact,” he stated, that some Catholics had neglected the obligations of social justice and charity and even, at times, added to workers’ oppression. All the same, he countered, the Church wanted to extend, with “solicitude,” an invitation to Catholic laborers “to return to the maternal bosom of the Church.” In other words, the encyclicals argued that Catholic social teachings would succeed in bringing about a new social order in part through the extension of hospitality toward workers and others made vulnerable by advanced industrialization in the early-twentieth-century modern era.

Dorothy Day’s _Catholic Worker_ writings applied Leo XIII’s and Pius XI’s principled extension of hospitality to situations of class conflict brewing in New York City in the 1930s. Using the papal texts as her starting point, she concretely defined social justice for the laboring classes as requiring Catholics to commit to the practice of radical hospitality, all the while indicating this dimension of care as simultaneously an outworking of motherly personalism. Radical hospitality, as Day presented it, meant extending as sort of maternal care to the vulnerable—giving in ways that were sacrificial, opening up the material and spiritual resources of the Catholic home to those who needed its shelter, and personally taking on the burdens of those who were suffering. She added to this line of reasoning the notion that radical hospitality promised to advance modern social reform in a way (again) not made possible through the strategies of scientism and statism. Where these trends within the humanitarian sphere encouraged materialism, humanity-effacing efficiency, and intense scrutiny of the needy, she argued, the pursuit of radical hospitality inspired self-effacing generosity, nurturing attitudes, and close identification with the needy. Day’s promotion of radical hospitality as a part of
personalism thus argued for mode of social reform that was modern in that it posited the sort of maternal care Day advocated as diminishing, rather than reinforcing, social and economic hierarchies between peoples. Sacrificial care of the sort her approach required, she reasoned, would mitigate differences between the suffering and care providers. Day’s vision for welcoming laborers and the poor into Catholic communities on a small scale and into mainstream society on a broader scale would, she argued, influence the creation of a new social logic grounded in the modern ideal of equality.

In advocating for the usefulness of radical hospitality as an approach to modern social reform, Day contrasted the gentle influence of sacrificial care with what she understood as the necessarily materialist influences inherent in scientism and statism. A social order based in equality and inclusion, she argued, required not efficient benevolence institutions, and a strong U.S. welfare state, or even a healthy free-market economy. Rather, it began with people’s collective and ongoing willingness to value caring for suffering neighbors more than their own personal comfort and security. Day pointed to voluntary poverty as important what she understood as the care-based, maternal practice of radical hospitality. As she explained in a September 1939 installment of “Day After Day,” “We have always pointed out that poverty is with us [Catholic Workers] a means to an end, not an end in itself.”94 Within the context of Catholic Worker houses of hospitality, the “end” of voluntary poverty became clear. “But how are we going to do the work without poverty?” Day queried.95 “How are we going to reach the unemployed, the organized and unorganized workers, and the destitute, with the teachings of the Gospel, the social teachings of the Church? How are we going to have money to pay for printing the paper, to buy bread, sugar, coffee, milk, for a thousand hungry people daily, unless we do without salaries, live together in a donated tenement?”96 In Day’s reasoning, sacrificial care
expressed through voluntary poverty provided material means for caring for the needy. As she argued, when the resources that might be used to sustain care providers were sacrificially shifted to supply the needs of the suffering, powerful social change proceeded apace. Weakness and want on the part of care providers became a starting-point for inviting workers and the unemployed into the Church’s “maternal bosom.” As she reflected, “There is no one who could not make more sacrifices to feed the poor, to clothe the naked. To follow Christ we have got to aim to be poor as He was.” Through voluntary poverty practiced as an extension of motherly personalism, Day reasoned, the papal encyclicals’ principle of welcoming the vulnerable would become a tangible force for the creation of a new society.

On a similar line, Day illustrated how the maternal care entailed in voluntary poverty provided a counter-solution to social reform strategies based in materialist ideologies. For instance, in a January 1936 article describing the practice of radical hospitality which took shape in the Catholic Worker’s communally run houses of hospitality, she wrote,

We have had a House of Hospitality now for two years, where we gave shelter to the homeless, fed the hungry, clothed the naked and cared for the sick. We have tried, all of us, to be workers and scholars, and to combine work and prayer according to the Benedictine ideal. We have tried to imitate St. Francis in his holy poverty. Our aim has been to combat the atheism of the day by our devotion to the liturgical movement; to combat the bourgeois spirit by the Francisian [sic.] spirit; to oppose to class war technique, the performance of the works of mercy.

As she explained, radical hospitality of the sort which combined tangible works of sacrificial care with the work of prayer countered materialism by proposing a different means for bringing about social harmony besides the stirring up of “bourgeois spirit” or class warfare. Holy poverty, characterized by Day as stemming from devout Catholic spirituality, was framed as
empowering the sort of movement capable of upending both socialist and capitalist impulses. Her vision for promoting personalism then indicated a powerful alternative to other strategies of social change which used as their inspiration the materialistic standards of economic efficiency or state-based authority.

In further decrying the limits of materialist ideologies as applied within the humanitarian sphere, Day presented the sacrificial and personal care entailed in radical hospitality as a more comprehensive and effective response to the sufferings of the Great Depression than efficiency-based scientism or state-authority based welfare systems. In a February 1939 column titled, “Complains of Organized Charity, Cops: Day After Day,” a piece which again exposed the limits of modern social reform, she recounted for readers the story of a transient who had hitch-hiked to New York with his two and a half year old son, Herbert. “Herbert,” Day wrote, “was looking for a bed for the night.” She described how she and Herbert’s father looked for lodging for the baby at a series of charitable agencies, naming in particular the McMahon Temporary Shelter for Children, the St. Barnabas Shelter, and the Foundling Hospital. Day recalled how a policeman aided their search, although noting how he added for the searchers’ benefit the warning that “New York wanted no transients, least of all transients with babies.” Day, commenting sarcastically about finally locating an agency with space for the child, added her own editorial comment that “being quite used to the ways of charity organizations and the efficiency which demanded that the recipient of charity be made to go through as many inquiries and as much red tape as possible regardless of the immediate need, we remained patient.”

Day’s wait at one ostensibly “efficient” agency came to naught, however. She described how the father’s “delinquency” prompted both a dismissal of his request for housing for the child
and a proposal on the part of the police that the father be arrested for vagrancy and sent back to the state from which he came. Disappointed but not daunted by the failed efforts to respond to need on the part of the “well-organized” benevolence agencies and the state (represented in the narrative by “the great police department of the City of New York”), Day closed her tale with her realization that there was an even better solution to the problem at hand: “We put the baby and the young father in my room where there are two single beds and we woke up Teresa [Day’s daughter], aged twelve and she and I went to a neighbor’s apartment to sleep on the floor.”

Her solution was personal sacrifice, the opening up of her own home for a family in need, the act of treating Herbert like he was her own child. Day made the provocative lesson of her tale clear: “It would have saved us lots of time and worry if I had decided on it before,” she wrote. In other words, the modern “efficiency” of institutionalized charities proved less able to achieve acceptable results than Day’s plan for motherly personalism. In this way, she constructed a negative comparison between the efficacy of scientism and statism and the more gentle (but still, in a way, efficient) influence of her unique approach to modern social reform.

Day’s writings went further to connect radical hospitality as an outworking of motherly personalism to a vision for shaping a new social order that proposed to diminish the sorts of limits to social change imposed by modern scientism and statism. For instance, in a January 1935 installment of “Day by Day,” she wrote:

All day there are the unemployed, starting at eight-thirty. They want underwear, shoes, coats, information about home relief. . . Or they just want to talk to us. There are the unemployed all day, and in the evening there are those who work and have no other time to come. So if the paper it [sic.] rather disjointed and unfinished in its writing, it is because there is so much to do for twelve hours, and only a few of the left over hours to write about the work and the thought behind the work.
Day’s reporting on the work of care which encompassed her days indicated personal sacrifice and the direct paying of costs on behalf of the needy as the best means for mobilizing social change. The “thought behind the work” might appear disjointed or unsophisticated, she explained, but a model of care for the least which was constant and practical constituted a better response to the swirl of needs kicked up by the Depression than mere intellectual strivings for solutions to social ills. The eclipse of writing and thought precipitated by Day’s personal example of radical hospitality suggested the priority she placed on the needs of suffering people, over and above that which could be given to the designing of clever benevolence systems. For her, the action of welcome proved more important, and more consequential with regard to social change, than a strained focus on ideologies. In this sense, she presented radical hospitality as mobilizing the public to respond to the Depression directly, rather than encouraging the reliance on abstract standards for scientific efficiency or state-centered benevolence schemes.

Additionally, Day framed radical hospitality as mobilizing motherly personalism in a way which would not only respond to the needs of the poor but also create social harmony out of seemingly entrenched class conflicts. Toward this end, her illustration of radical hospitality included examples of concrete, sacrificial care extended on behalf of organized laborers engaged in struggles over rights to fair wages and decent working conditions. For example, in a January 1937 vignette, Day recounted how the Catholic Worker used hospitality as a means for supporting a group of New York seamen on strike. Her column portrayed the striking workers as guests at the Catholic Worker’s Tenth Avenue house of hospitality, a “large store” situated “just around the corner from the headquarters of the striking seamen,” who were “coming and going” through the “packed” building and “reading the Catholic magazines, papers and
pamphlets that we have around the place.” Printed copies of the papal encyclicals, Day observed, were circulating among these groups of workers. She recounted the seamen’s discussions of the strike and the economic issues which had provoked it, adding that “the question of the faith” had come up and that some of the workers had begun to argue that “without a supernatural outlook, unions cannot help but fail,” and “how without a fatherhood of God, there can be no brotherhood of man.” To Day, this overhead conversation implied that radical hospitality was emerging as a form of social influence which promised to help the labor movement achieve its stated end, the end of familiar connection between workers. With her reflection on the striking seamen, she suggested that the influence of hospitality remained the only way to bring about such a “brotherhood of man” not vulnerable to persistent conflict and failure.

From the perspective of her experience extending hospitality to workers at the Tenth Avenue house, Day also established a connection between the material provision of coffee and food for cold workers on strike and the notion of social harmony—the later brought about by a community’s commitment to motherly personalism. According to her, Catholic Worker hospitality adjoined “spiritual sustenance” of the sort capable of encouraging social harmony with the giving of “bread and jam and peanut butter and apple butter, or any such spread,” these products donated for the sake of practically caring for striking workers. Donations of “jars of preserves,” Day urged, provided a way for Catholics to join the “fight to achieve better conditions of labor.” With this, she argued that the material hospitality of the Catholic home could be wielded in order to shape a new social order which encouraged the welcoming rather than mistreatment of workers.
Day’s illustrations of radical hospitality as ushering in a “brotherhood of man” posited her vision for motherly personalism as precipitating a new social fabric which blurred lines separating rich and poor, laborers and property owners. In a June 1934 column, for example, Day described a visit to “St. Zita’s” (a Catholic women’s charity) in which she was mistaken for a woman coming to “beg for shelter.”\textsuperscript{110} “These incidents are significant,” she wrote, “After all my heels are not run down—my clothes were neat—I am sure I looked averagely comfortable and well cared for—and yet it was taken for granted that because I dropped into these places, I needed help.”\textsuperscript{111} Day’s experience of being mistaken for a poor woman prompted her to instruct her readers to look for the poor in all places, in department store waiting rooms, at the movies, at restaurants. Her lesson demonstrated how the poor who “have no place to go, no place to rest but in these public places—and no good hot lunch to look forward to” held a significant place in society, their role being to test the “sight” of the public and its ability to respond to need with maternal compassion.\textsuperscript{112} She prompted her readers to look out for “these sad ones, these desolate ones, with no homes, no jobs, and never enough food in their stomachs.”\textsuperscript{113} She argued that the achievement of social equality required those with means to provide homes, jobs, and food for the suffering, with the added insight that the differences between the wealthy and the poor were slight. Day’s narrative indicated a way to welcome the poor into society—by seeking them out and taking personal responsibility for their care. This example of radical hospitality, she implied, promised to nullify the differences separating the socially least from those in a position to extend care.

The next section takes the examination of this progression further, illustrating how the collective community Day articulated as resulting from radical hospitality promised not only to
diminish social hierarchies but also to significantly advance the project of modern equality through means other than scientism and statism.

“To bring the social teachings of the Church to the man in the street”: Catholic Action and the Creation of a New Social Order through Motherly Personalism

Pope Leo XIII’s and Pius XI’s encyclicals each insisted that the state and other large institutions were essential for bringing about social justice in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century modern era. All the same, these texts strenuously argued for the importance of “subsidiarity,” the development of local organizations run by laity which were designed to protect the weak and vulnerable and to supply sufficient care for the poor and socially marginalized when large institutions (both public and private) proved apathetic toward or incapable of completing that task. QA drew particular attention to the “injustice[s]” which were sometimes perpetuated through the “transfer to the larger and higher collectivity” responsibilities which could be undertaken by “less and subordinate bodies.” QA reiterated RN’s vision of developing a sort of subsidiarity which would benefit laborers in particular through “workingmen’s associations” which would “help each member to better his condition to the utmost in body, soul and property” and “pay special and chief attention to the duties of religion and morality.” Even so, by the time Pius XI’s text was written, forty years had passed in pursuit of RN’s vision. QA acknowledged that the economic and legal circumstances the Church confronted in many nations made the creation of Catholic labor organizations next to impossible. As a solution to this obstacle, QA proposed that the Church support Catholics who joined non-Catholic labor union which expressly valued “justice and equity” and would allow “Catholic members full freedom to follow the dictates of their conscience and to obey the precepts of the
With these words, QA designated labor organizations as a fitting outlet for Catholic action, these organizations’ support of the cause of workers’ rights aligning them at least in part with the principle of Catholic action entailed in Catholic social teachings.

In the 1930s, the U.S. bishops echoed QA’s emphasis on the value of labor organizations and explicitly embraced the papal encyclicals’ call for Catholics to support of labor unions. These organizations, they argued, would enable workers to put Catholic social teachings into action. Labor unions would allow Catholics to both advocate on behalf of workers’ rights and put pressure on the state and on private industries to correct economic injustices, thus providing better living and working conditions for those whose livelihoods had been threatened by America’s 1930s economic crisis. Support of labor organizations enabled the U.S. bishops to argue for how Catholic social teachings might inspire a plan for pursuing social justice for workers which did not fall prey to what they understood as the materialist extremes of either unchecked capitalism or completely centralized state authority, as advocated by Socialists and Communists.

Dorothy Day illustrated how Catholic action, as it was characterized in Leo XIII’s and Pius XI’s encyclicals, promised to advance the cause of workers’ rights. But perhaps more importantly she added that Catholic action was meant to create a community of labor activists which would transcend the sorts of internal and external conflicts to which the 1930s U.S. labor movement seemed prone. Day’s approach to Catholic action argued that the best way to attain increased rights for workers was to pursue the modern ideal of equality and the Catholic principle of social harmony. In building this line of argument, she stressed that Catholic action could be most effectively mobilized through the influence of motherly personalism. In her
writings, Day indicated acts personal care, sacrificial hospitality, and gentle persuasion, all marked by her as motherly, as the proper bases for an approach to collective action which promised to diminish rather than stoke conflicts. The approach to social reform she proposed aimed to achieve social harmony in part by showing how the Catholic home, rather than the state, might provide the pivotal resources required for mobilizing social change. Day thus posited motherly personalism as intended to inspire not just individual practices of care but also collective action. For her, sacrifice, maternal nurturance, and gentleness encouraged labor activism of the sort which promised to yield a new social order, social harmony brought about by welcoming of social differences. The re-aligned social order she proposed thereby posited a model of feminine humanitarian authority that could counter what she saw as the tendency of scientism and statism to reinforce rather than obviate social hierarchies in the humanitarian sphere.

Day illustrated how motherly personalism encouraged Catholic action by showing the ways in which it brought the material and moral resources of the Catholic home to bear on the task of organizing labor. For instance, in a January 1936 “Day by Day” subtitled “Lodging House,” she recounted a conversation with a union worker who, she argued, proved with his own words laborers’ need for the sort of influence that her approach to modern social reform could provide. In recalling a day spent passing out newspapers outside of a municipal building where thousands of laboring men were being fed a free Christmas dinner, Day wrote, “Many of the workers knew [the Catholic Worker] and had been reading it.” One ex-miner from Pennsylvania approached Day and declared, “I’m no Communist. I’m a Catholic, but what I say is that the unions need cleaning up.” Day interpreted the miner’s words to mean that the Church’s interest in labor unions went beyond vocal advocacy and the donation of time, food,
and money. It also meant applying the Church’s moral resources (its “cleaning up” abilities) to the problem of reforming the unionists themselves. As Day suggested through her story, the “cleaning up” of the labor unions was work well-suited to the Catholic Worker as an organization which practiced personalism. As Day reasoned, such a gentle and generous approach to Catholic faith promised to spread among organized laborers as a result of the Catholic Worker’s influence, this example of social change increasing the effectiveness of labor organizations’ advocacy work.

According to Day, Catholic action, when empowered by motherly personalism in the form of tangible hospitality extended from the Catholic home, provided the foundation for a new labor movement oriented around acts of care rather than violence and coercion. She laid out pieces of her plan for using the material resources of the Catholic home to advance collective labor organization in passages like one in from a February 1935 Catholic Worker titled, “Day after Day,” and subtitled “This morning a young Socialist to breakfast.” In this one short narrative passage, Day recounted a conversation she had had with a young visitor to a Catholic Worker house of hospitality. The visitor, she related, had once been a Communist but was now a Socialist. The story began with Day implicitly calling attention to the fact the Catholic Worker had not considered its guest’s (ostensible) objections to Catholicism as a reason for refusing to provide hospitable care in the form of a breakfast. Her narrative demonstrated that hospitality pointed the way toward the practice of welcoming all people to the table, regardless of differences in political viewpoints. As Day recounted, the young Socialist was not entirely reticent to praise Catholic faith. “It seems that the Catholic Workers and the Communists have it all,” he exclaimed, in his lament over a “lack of zeal” among his fellow socialists. She responded to her guest by engaging him in a conversation over “the arguments as to the existence
of God, notably the argument from conscious."122 God’s gift of “conscience,” she explained for him and for her readers, bespoke more authority that what she called the Communists’ “absolute standards of right or wrong.”123 “From whom do these standards come?” she queried, and then answered, “They would say from Karl Marx or Lenin, I suppose.”124 With these written thoughts, Day instructed her guest (and her readers) on the differences between a labor movement based in Catholic social teachings and one derived from the teachings of Marx and Lenin. Catholic social teachings, she reasoned, proved superior to Communism or Socialism, the argument for conscience as a divine gift universally bestowed on all peoples crafting a more authoritative and unifying basis for workers’ claims to equality than “absolute” dictates articulated by human leaders. More than that, Day showed her guest and readers how such a vision for organizing labor might take concrete shape, namely in the form of a meal offered to a visitor, or, in another sense, the resources of the Catholic home opened for the sake of bringing genuine moral reform to the cause of workers’ rights.

As this story and others indicate, Day presented social harmony as consequent to a strategy for labor organization which embraced an approach to Catholic action derived from motherly personalism rather than from the impulse to stoke conflict. For instance, in a January 1939 “Day After Day” which recounted a “little argument we had with friends over the teamsters’ strike,” she posited the sort of personalism she advocated as a means for building cooperative coalitions among laborers and labor activists.125 Day told the story of having spent an afternoon at teamster meetings distributing “some thousands of papers,” only to return home to a confrontational accusation by some teamsters (over dinner at a Catholic Worker house of hospitality no less!) implying that the Catholic Worker had endorsed an unauthorized strike. Day responded:
Nobody seems to understand that when we are out at strike meetings or picket lines or demonstrations distributing the paper, we are trying to bring the social teachings of the Church to the man in the street. They all insist upon believing that we are participating in the strike or endorsing once faction against another. We do not know the least thing about factions in the various unions. How could we keep up on them all? The great job that the Catholic Worker has to do is to try to reach the workers, bring to them a philosophy of labor, speak to them of Christian solidarity, and point out the need of a long-range program.  

The Catholic Worker, Day reasoned, was focused more on serving the “man in the street” than on maintaining organizational ranks within the labor movement. Catholic social teachings, she argued, thus proved a force more capable than any individual “faction” when it came to producing a “long-range program” for organized labor. Day’s words spoke to the futility of any one group’s efforts to overpower another, her statement that she knew not “the least thing about factions” more a gentle dismissal of these sorts of conflicts than outright engagement with the critical comments of her teamster guests. Only through gentleness and hospitality, she suggested, could a vision for creating a harmonious labor movement not intent on pitting one faction against another survive. This vision required the application of a philosophy of labor based in the notion of “Christian solidarity” or social unity rather than strenuous advocacy for one labor faction over another. Embedded in Day’s story was a strategy intended to unite all parties around the principle of actively caring for laborers not around ideological or organizational affiliation. “We have no candidates to push,” she insisted, “It is all the workers that we are trying to reach, all the leaders, whether they are Communist or Catholic.”

Besides her critique of Communists, Socialists, and labor union leaders, Day contrasted the gentle, albeit persuasive, quality of personalism she promoted to that of approaches to modern social reform which were primarily materialist and valued statism over hospitality and
care. In a May 1935 “Day by Day,” for example, she illustrated how the application of personalism’s gentle influence proved capable of reframing a Communist-organized labor protest outside of a state-run benevolence institution:

News of the month in the way of Catholic Worker street activities. A Communist demonstration being held in front of Home Relief headquarters in an Italian neighborhood, we got out a leaflet addressed to police, Home Relief workers and unemployed alike, bearing quotations from the early fathers and the Popes as to the distribution of created goods, and joining the unemployed in their appeal for more adequate food and clothing.\textsuperscript{128}

Day’s column identified the multiple “sides” represented at the protest scene: Home Relief workers, the police, Communists, and the unemployed. Her words framed the Catholic Worker’s “street activists” as moderators between these conflicting parties. A resolution to this tense situation could be found, she explained, in the teachings of “the early fathers and the Popes” who had established the Church’s solidarity with the unemployed, even as they provided a message meant to guide state officials as in their attempts to extend care to the needy. “With these reminders we are sure that social workers and home relief officials will be more conscious of the attitude of meekness and love they should maintain in dealing with the poor who come to them,” she wrote.\textsuperscript{129} Thus Day attempted to show how the influence of meekness and love proved superior to “Communist demonstration” when it came to satisfying social agitators and sufferers alike. From her perspective, her modeling of a gentle reminder to the state’s agents provided a better course of action than a raucous demonstration when it came to public advocacy on behalf of the poor.
In this instance, Day deployed Catholic action through personalism in order to influence state officials in addition to Communist demonstrators ostensibly at the scene in order to inflame tensions between the state and the unemployed. Meekness and love, she explained, would do more than state-based Communism when it came to encouraging the distribution of created goods and answering the appeal of the unemployed for more adequate food and clothing. She put forward Catholic faith, not revolutionary changes to the structural arrangement of power in the state, as the surest path to radical social change. She concluded, “And who knows but that this reminder reaching the poor and rebellious who gather at these demonstrations may not bring them closer to the Church who ever has the need of her poor at heart.”

According to Day, hospitality and gentleness inspired by Catholic social teachings and brought about through the concrete practices of motherly personalism could achieve social harmony in a way not possible either through expansions to the U.S. welfare state or the instigation of Communist revolution.

Day’s arguments in favor of motherly personalism further posited the Catholic home as superior to the state as a source of social change. In fact, her writing framed personal care and radical hospitality as satisfying the needs of the poor and socially marginalized more effectively than the work of state-based agencies run according to the standards of scientific efficiency. She proposed Catholic action of the sort she advocated as potentially replacing state authority, the task of caring for the poor no longer relegated to professionally trained state agents but taken up by individuals inspired to practice motherly personalism. In this way, Day directly challenged the state, creating tensions of the sort depicted in a passage from a February 1938 “Day After Day” subtitled “Personal Responsibility.” In her column, Day recalled a day on which the New York City Health Department paid a visit to one of the Catholic Worker’s houses of hospitality.
“We protested their right to come into our home at 115 Mott Street and snoop around our kitchen,” she began. Explaining her position, she wrote:

We were not running a restaurant or a lodging house, we explained. We were a group of individuals exercising personal responsibility in caring for those who came to us. They were not strangers, we pointed out, since we regarded them as brothers in Christ. We were not an institution, or a Home with a capital letter, but a home, a private home.

In recounting the tale, Day noted that her arguments persuaded a few from the Health Department office but “not so the inspector, who surveyed us with a stony glare and great contempt.” Even so, she continued to uphold the hospitality that the Catholic Worker provided through a private residence as a site of resistance to the state. In doing so, she implied that the hospitality entailed in considering all needy seekers of refuge as “brothers in Christ” was akin to the hospitality of a mother opening her home to God’s children. By framing Catholic Worker hospitality in this way, she posited her relationship to the house of hospitality guests as exceeding the parameters of state intervention and the scope of institutional scrutiny. In the end, Day’s narrative concedes that the house would have to comply with “the law which held that we were feeding the public.” All the same, the groundwork was laid for an approach to Catholic action inspired by personalism which would provide a counterweight to state authority within the context of modern social reform.

Catholic action of the sort Day advocated demonstrated how a new social order might arise through the tendency of motherly personalism to diminish the importance of social differences. Day, in fact, portrayed the “different” approach to social activism as transcending differences, in this sense using the practices of care and hospitality as means for encouraging
modern equality. For instance, in a January 1939 “Day After Day,” she wrote, “We are out to convert others to our point of view, to work for a pluralist order where Agnostics, as well as Catholics, Protestants and Jews, can work for the common good. And it is only in the measure that Catholics exemplify by their lives the teachings of their Church that they can attract others to their point of view.” With these words, Day offered her take on Catholic action as enabling not just collective action on behalf of laborers but also a pluralist and inclusive “brotherhood of man,” one based in the notion that all were counted as “children of God.” Day’s arguments promoting personalism thus appeared as a plan for aiding the poor and a tool for diminishing social hierarchies.

Conclusion

Dorothy Day illustrated motherly personalism as derived from Catholic social teachings but also as wielding a powerful public influence capable of realizing the goals of modern social reform, particularly the modern ideals of universal equality and social justice. She crafted personalism into an approach to modern social reform reliant on the concrete practices of personal care for the poor, radical hospitality, and Catholic action. The model of care and sacrifice Day demonstrated meant to transcend social differences rather than reinforce them. In this sense, Day argued for motherly personalism as radically altering the humanitarian sphere, both by challenging the preeminence of scientism and statism and by supplying an alternative social logic to reshape established humanitarian practices. Her model of feminine humanitarian authority became a new social logic extolling a “different” way for caring for the poor and the suffering.
In the final chapter, I extend this conclusion, examining how Day’s humanitarian rhetoric and her advocacy on behalf of motherly personalism provides a counter-point to the social reform visions presented by Evangeline Booth and Aimee Semple McPherson, leaders who, unlike Day, premised their influence in the humanitarian sphere on aspects of nationalism rather than social equality. Day, I argue, shows how religious women’s humanitarian authority might become a tool wielded not for the reinforcement of the status quo but as a powerful rhetorical resource for the promotion of social change.

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4 quoted in Roberts, 3.
6 Dorothy Day, “All in a Day,” Catholic Worker, October 1933, 5.
7 As Charles Curran notes, there is “no official canon or list of Catholic social teaching[s]” (Catholic Social Teaching 1891-present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis [Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002], 6). However, commentators traditionally mark the inception of this distinct grouping of texts with the publication of Pope Leo XIII’s Rerum novarum in 1891. For a listing of the documents generally grouped as “Catholic social teachings,” see the introduction to Curran’s Catholic Social Teaching 1891-present.
9 Chester Gillis, Roman Catholicism in America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 72.
12 Furfey, 92-97.
13 An index of the Catholic Worker compiled by Anne and Alice Klejment lists seventy-six articles attributed to Dorothy Day during the time period encompassed by this study (1933-1939). Klejment and Klejment’s count includes works signed by Day as well as articles reasonably assumed to have been authored by her. This chapter offers close readings of articles within the collection these authors define. The articles chosen for this study offer the best demonstrations of how Day sought to bring motherly personalism to bear on the humanitarian sphere in response to the various economic and social crises precipitated by the Great Depression.
Here I note that the structure of this chapter deviates from the previous two chapters’ pattern of breaking up the figures’ humanitarian rhetorics into three separate “shifts” or time periods. Instead, I analyze Day’s *Catholic Worker* writings between the years 1933 (the year the paper was founded) and 1939, attending to her integration of illustrations of motherly personalism into texts advocating on behalf of three specific aspects of Catholic social teachings applicable to that era’s various economic and social crises. I claim that the model of motherly personalism Day articulated through these texts remained focused throughout the entire period studied on the three principles detailed in this chapter’s three sections. In the conclusion, I compare Day’s humanitarian rhetoric to those of Booth and McPherson, with the following stipulations: first, that her efforts to address issues related to interwar years’ developments within the humanitarian sphere covered a shorter span of years than did Booth’s and McPherson’s, but, second, that her humanitarian rhetoric remained more consistent and more cogent with regard to its ability to posit women’s religious influence as an effective source of social change than did those of the other two cases considered in this study.


18 As Piehl comments, Day also wrote for a short time for *The Masses*, a short-lived but poignantly radical publication co-edited by Floyd Dell and Max Eastman (*Breaking Bread*, 12).


20 Roberts, 87.

21 Coles, 50.

22 Fisher, 25.

23 Michael Baxter, “Blowing the Dynamite of the Church,” in *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement: Centenary Essays*, eds. William Thorn, Phillip Runkel, and Susan Mountin (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001), 79. Mark Massa adds that Day’s interpretations of Catholic social teachings relied especially on the work of French personalists Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain; English Catholic distributionists, such as G.K. Chesterton and Eric Gill; and Catholic mystics like Therese of Lisieux (*Catholics and American Culture: Fulton Sheen, Dorothy Day, and the Notre Dame Football Team* [New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999], 124.)

24 Coles, 73.

25 Maurin played a significant role in the initial publication of the *Catholic Worker*. According to Fisher, however, Maurin’s relationship to the newspaper after the publication of its first issue reflected a “tension between Maurin’s desire to see his program taken literally and the largely symbolic role to which he was relegated by virtue of his personality and appearance” (28-29). Although Maurin and Day’s partnership within the context of the Catholic Worker movement continued for many years, by the time the newspaper’s second issue was printed, Day had taken over full editorial responsibilities (Roberts, 36). For a perspicacious discussion of the complexities behind Day and Maurin’s working relationship, see Carol Jablonski’s “Resisting the ‘Inevitability’ of War.”

26 Massa, 105.

27 Massa, 105. Massa describes Day as doubting whether an American Catholic publication announcing ideas “on the front line against communism” would ever succeed in gaining a hearing, either in the general public or in the Church. Even so, in 1934 the *Catholic Worker*’s circulation numbered 25,000 copies. In May 1935, that number had
risen to 100,000 (Massa, 117). In 1938, circulation reached 190,000. In contrast, Day and her handful of companions handed out 2,500 copies of the newspaper’s May 1933 inaugural issue (Jablonski, “Resisting,” 423).


31 Gillis, 72.


33 Dorothy Day, “About Many Things in N.Y. and on Farm,” Catholic Worker, July-August, 1939, 1; Day, “Day by Day,” October 1933, 6. In the Catholic Worker’s first year, Day titled her monthly column “All in a Day,” and alternatively in subsequent years “Day by Day” or “Day after Day.” In 1946, she changed the column’s title to “On Pilgrimage,” the name which it kept for the remainder of Day’s editorial tenure.


39 Oates, Catholic Philanthropic Tradition, 90.


46 O’Brien, 69.


49 Charles Curran, Catholic Social Teaching, 131.

50 Leo XIII, 6.


52 Leo XIII, 1.


According to Fisher, he helped develop the Catholic Labor Guild, an “offshoot” of the Catholic Worker which “quickly grew independent of the movement” (88).


As Shannon notes in his explication of RN, however, interpreters “should be leery of reading the foundations of a preferential option for the poor” into late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Catholic social teachings (137). Curran adds that, while RN and QA each clearly called the Church to protect the rights of the poor, language...
advocating preferential treatment for the poor did not enter into Catholic social teachings until the 1970s (Catholic Social Teachings, 183).

88 Curran, Catholic Social Teachings, 189.

89 Curran, Catholic Social Teaching, 199-200.

90 American Church leaders shared Leo XIII’s and Pius XI’s concern with regard to the influence of Communism. The American Communist Party, the U.S. bishops argued, appealed to workers by suggesting the possibility of a secular version of the Christian gospel’s vision for a new “brotherhood of man” (Our Bishops Speak: National Pastorals and Annual Statements of the Hierarchy of the United States: Resolutions of Episcopal Committees; and Communications of the Administrative Board of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1919-1951, ed. Raphael Huber [Milwaukee, WI: Bruce], 277). As Curan notes, during the Depression era, the U.S. bishops became “worried that communist leaders in the United States might take advantage of the chaos to introduce their approach, which masqueraded as the champion of the downtrodden, the archenemy of capitalistic abuses, and the redeemer of the poor and the working classes” (Curran, “Reception,” 471). The bishops concluded that, “The United States needed to respond to the problems of the Depression in accord with the principles of papal teaching to avoid a radical takeover by Communists” (Curran, “Reception,” 471).


92 quoted in Hinze, 165.

93 quoted in Hinze, 165.


98 Dorothy Day, “To Christ—To the Land!,” Catholic Worker, January 1936, 1.


105 The Catholic Worker’s involvement in the seamen’s strike had begun several months earlier in May 1936. A group of seamen in New York City went on strike to protest ship owners’ policies as well as what they saw as compromising collaboration between ownership at the International Seamen’s Union. In the summer of 1936, the Catholic Worker housed about fifty seamen for a period of over a month in one of its houses of hospitality. By November 1936 the striking seamen were facing a grim situation, both the owners and ISU members proving intractable to their demands. The Catholic Worker responded by renting a building at 181 Tenth Avenue to help supply striking workers with shelter from the cold, coffee, and food. According to Miller, at its height, the Tenth Street house of hospitality fed a thousand workers a day. Day contrasted the Catholic Worker’s support of the seamen to that offered by the American Communist Party, the ACP providing only cash and extra picketers for the line, while the Catholic Worker extended the more hospitable gift of Catholic charity (Miller, 130-133).


This section examines Leo XIII’s and Pius XI’s development of the principle of “subsidiarity,” or the idea that local, subordinate organizations were better positioned to address social issues than large, centralized institutions. “Catholic Action” was a specific term used in Catholic social teachings to encourage subsidiarity through the organization of a variety of Catholic lay organizations, including Catholic labor unions. Even so, Catholic action was also a general term used by Catholic leaders and intellectuals in the 1930s and 40s to describe the direct participation of Catholic laity in the day-to-day work of the Church in the world. Catholic Action groups which operated under official Church sanctions were commissioned by the Church hierarchy for work “deemed suitable” for lay people (Fisher, 93). According to Fisher, Catholic Action groups “proliferated throughout the 1930s and 1940s,” only not in the American context (93). In the U.S., Catholic Action as a practical concept met with mixed responses. As Fisher writes, several “subsidiary” organizations (such as the National Catholic Welfare Conference) were organized in the U.S. by the U.S. bishops, but remained completely voluntary and performed their operations “without canonical jurisdiction” (93). For their part, Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day accepted the Church’s definition of Catholic Action as work by the laity in the apostolate that was sanctioned by Church hierarchy. Even so, Maurin freely admitted that the Catholic Worker’s houses of hospitality (and its monthly newspaper) did not fit this definition. Nevertheless, Maurin continued to assert the Catholic Worker’s legitimacy as a Catholic lay organization, insisting that, in Fisher’s words, “the houses of hospitality only became necessary upon the failure of America’s bishops to initiate their own programs” (45). Day echoed Maurin’s claim that the Catholic Worker functioned as a Catholic action group, albeit without formal Church sanctioning. In this sense, Day posited the Catholic Worker as embodying significant aspects of the encyclicals’ call to Catholic action in the general sense, even if not in the technical sense discussed in Leo XIII’s and Pius XI’s encyclicals.


CHAPTER 5:  
CONCLUSION

In what the War Cry characterized as a “stirring, brilliant” address to the American Salvation Army’s forces marking the end of her tenure as Commander, Evangeline Booth emphasized again the importance of “her contribution to the moral, social, and religious life of the country.” Booth’s words traced the advance of her vision to extend the ASA’s influence and bring her authority as a leader to bear on the humanitarian sphere, the latter goal framed as vital to the continuing development of the nation’s virtue. The type of service she modeled as the ASA’s executive manager, she argued, provided the best means for protecting against the “destructive and seductive foes” which threatened to undermine American power. Thus, Booth encapsulated her leadership as extending far beyond the strategic operations of the organization she oversaw. In fact, according to her, her influence encompassed no less than responsibility for maintaining the standards of American greatness. Booth added to her November 1934 parting command the further exhortation that all of the “nations of the earth” needed to “Try Religion.” As tensions between nations rose and precipitated militarism, these words carried a weighty significance. They implied Booth’s argument that the sort of Christian service and sacrifice she advocated needed to play an even greater role that just resolving America’s economic crisis—it needed to be extended into the complicated realms of a world-wide humanitarian sphere as well.
At the close of the 1930s, Aimee Semple McPherson, too, turned her approach to advocating Christian service toward the embrace of a robust nationalism. As her 1939 Independence Day address indicated, Americanism constituted her response to what she understood as the insidious influence of “traitors and foreign enemies” bent on undermining the nation’s security and its economic recovery. Americanism in McPherson’s humanitarian rhetoric offered the argument that feminine service could inspire national unity. Even so, McPherson promoted a model of Christian service that, rather than welcoming differences in the name of charity and love, actually reinforced social hierarchies based in race and class distinctions. As with Booth, McPherson’s shift away from an approach to social reform in which “race, creed and status make no difference” to the promotion of nationalism appears significant given increasing opportunities for Christian organizations, like the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, to extend their humanitarian influence beyond national boundaries. McPherson’s turn toward Americanism thus promised to influence the global humanitarian sphere according to already established social hierarchies rather than out of a new vision to extend comfort and care universally in response to manifest human sufferings.

In a very different sense, Dorothy Day responded to the material, political, and existential crises of the late 1930s with an argument promoting a model of feminine humanitarian authority which emphasized sacrifice, care, and gentleness as essential to social change and economic recovery. She articulated a vision not based in nationalistic refrains but in the notion that modern equality, when pursued through the practices of motherly personalism, held the potential to inspire a new social order. She marked the practices of care, hospitality, and collective action on behalf of workers as stemming from a feminine influence which aimed to minimize differences and the social hierarchies they inspired. Her promotion of motherly personalism thus
pointed the way toward the creation of what she called “a pluralist order where Agnostics, as well as Catholics, Protestants and Jews, can work for the common good.”

Personalism, as she illustrated it, became the impetus for creating an inclusive “brotherhood of man,” a modern vision for equality and social harmony founded on the Catholic notion that all members of society, even the socially least and the most vulnerable, ought to be counted as “children of God” and treated as such. Day’s pursuit of humanitarian influence illustrated how religiously inspired values remained relevant within the early-twentieth-century American humanitarian sphere. According to Day, the public’s embrace of her example of motherly personalism might become a means for shaping a new social fabric in which differences incited love not apathy or violence. Thus Day, in sharp contrast to McPherson and Booth, sought a more radical change to the American humanitarian sphere, one not adapted to its entrenched conditions and standards. In this sense, her humanitarian rhetoric constituted not only an argument as to the ongoing relevance of religious women’s humanitarian influence but an alternative strategy for advancing social change in America during the interwar years.

Evangeline Booth, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Dorothy Day each engaged the challenge of inventing new arguments which would transform the bases underlying religious women’s participation in the humanitarian sphere, arguments capable of resolving the problematic terminology and waning ideological underpinnings of the previous era’s model of female moral authority. Their humanitarian rhetorics proved powerful when it came to the contributions they made to the American humanitarian sphere in the 1920s and 30s, yet varied with regard to their respective abilities to promote significant social change. Booth’s, McPherson’s, and Day’s rhetorics argued for the viability of religious women’s influence within modern social reform contexts increasingly dominated by the standards of scientism and the
strategies of statism. However, close study of these rhetorics raises questions as to how their influence impacted humanitarian practices. What this comparative analysis of three leaders’ humanitarian rhetorics shows is a persistent connection between religious women’s humanitarian authority, statism, and aggressive nationalism. In the following sections, I offer an assessment of this study’s findings. I suggest a direction for continuing to analyze the significant impacts, both positive and negative, of these sorts of religious rhetorics on American humanitarianisms.

Evangeline Booth, Aimee Semple McPerson, Dorothy Day and their Early-Twentieth-Century Inventions of Humanitarian Authority

The late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century American humanitarian sphere was significantly influenced by religious women. Nevertheless, the contribution of women religious leaders to humanitarian efforts in the 1920s and 30s faced an intense challenge given the waning influence of Victorian cultural values. At the close of the century, Victorian cultural values had provided a means for some religious women to expand their involvement in social reform contexts, but they became an obstacle for early-twentieth-century religious women leaders, given new standards governing the development of modern social reform. The emergence of modern social reform as a “science” and benevolence as best channeled through the state meant that religious women needed to provide new arguments and demonstrate new means legitimating their participation in the humanitarian sphere. The three figures at the focus of this study illustrate how some leaders did indeed attempt to invent new modes of humanitarian authority in the 1920s and 30s in response to the erosion of the older model of female moral authority. Booth, McPherson, and Day approached this task by articulating humanitarian rhetorics which held fast to the particular sectarian religious values of the organizations they led,
while simultaneously signaling the willing embrace of some core aspects of 1920s and 30s modern social reform. Evangeline Booth cast conservative evangelical Christianity as essential to modern social reform by suggesting the importance of her role as the executive manager of a Christian service machine. Aimee Semple McPherson argued for the relevance of religious women’s humanitarian influence by emphasizing the potential for sisterly service to inspire a national recovery from the crisis of the Great Depression. Dorothy Day characterized motherly personalism as fulfilling the aims of Catholic social teachings while at the same time providing the best means for realizing the modern ideals of equality and social justice.

Each of these leaders argued in favor of the significance of religious women’s humanitarian authority in different ways and with varying degrees of adaptation with regard to trends toward scientism and statism in the humanitarian sphere. Booth’s and McPherson’s humanitarian rhetorics resembled one another in terms of their combining of models of Christian women’s service with modern standards of organizational efficiency and state-driven institutional expansion. Booth emphasized in particular the need for middle-class conservative evangelical Protestant women, she a primary exemplar, to continue influencing working-class and poor populations. She attempted to reconcile her approach to Christian service with modern social reform strategies by framing the vast institutional matrix she led as a Christian service machine empowered by religious virtue and devotion but still guided by an efficient executive manager. McPherson adopted a similar tactic, emphasizing how the Angelus Temple commissary’s efficiently organized, hygienic benevolence systems still managed to deliver Christian charity to the myriad of down-and-out’s turning to the church for help. Having incorporated charity work into her ministry from the beginning, she took the dawning of economic crisis in the late 1920s as an opportunity to build a large-scale benevolence institution
essentially powered by what she characterized as a feminine mode of Christian service. The Temple commissary, she argued, contributed to the Los Angeles community not just by enabling the wide distribution of charity but by doing so while still retaining a value for expressing a sisterly devotion to the hopeless and helpless. Booth’s and McPherson’s rhetorics thus resonated in their suggestion that the sort of modern social reform strategy which valued efficiency and scale would continue to thrive under the influence and direction of conservative Protestant women.

Booth and McPherson also responded in similar ways to fundamental shifts in 1920s and 30s welfare systems toward state-centered benevolence distribution. Each of these leaders cast their charitable efforts as Christian service which was also in service to the state. Booth, for her part, characterized the ASA’s institutional service network as mobilizing Christian service toward the end of extending the state’s authority. By campaigning on behalf of prohibition and fostering direct partnerships between government relief systems and the ASA during the Depression era, Booth articulated an approach to humanitarianism which suggested the state as in the best position to resolve the nation’s economic and social crises, even as it continued to argue for how the conservative evangelical Protestant religious values she held dear proved beneficial to the development and operation of state-based welfare systems. In a similar way, McPherson contributed significantly to the development of state-based benevolence systems during the late 1920s and 1930s. She did so to some degree by framing her version of Christian service as offering service to the state. McPherson translated her ministry’s calling to serve the poor into an effort to promote social order during a time of national crisis. In another sense, though, she broke from this pattern when it came to the local issue of California’s 1930s legal restrictions on the extension of benevolence to migrants. Here McPherson demonstrated how
Christian service of the sort which valued inclusive charity over the rule of law proved superior to state-run benevolence mechanisms. Thus, she cast the mode of service she advocated as a means for making the machinery of modern social reform more capable of fulfilling the modern goal of social equality, compassion and invitation replacing state regulation and restriction as governing principles within the humanitarian sphere. Yet Booth and McPherson each conformed in a significant sense to statism as it defined and shaped modern social reform in the 1920s and 30s. As McPherson’s case illustrates, Christian service, as infused in her humanitarian rhetoric, continued to suggest ongoing dissonance between the practices of compassion and personal care and the state’s increasingly dominant authority to direct organized benevolence.

Booth’s and McPherson’s general pattern of serving the extension of state-based authority within the humanitarian sphere led to the association of their humanitarian rhetorics with the advance of American nationalism. Booth argued for the American Salvation Army’s approach to Christian service as inspiring an appropriate moral standard for the U.S. as a modern nation. In this sense, she framed her role as an executive manager of a Christian service institution as akin to advancing American nationalism. The ASA’s Christian service machine thus became less dedicated to the service of humanity as a whole than to that of the American nation and its interests. Similarly, McPherson’s mid-1930s commitment to “hold high the standard of government and church” tied her version of sisterly service to the inspiration of Americanism. Her advocacy for feminine passion within the context of Christian service morphed into cries for the protection of white, Protestant, middle-class culture from the threat of “foreign” influences. Sisterly service, in McPherson’s illustration of it, thus became a means less for encouraging the care of the socially marginalized and more a means for promoting a national recovery through the exclusion of those whose political affiliation, ethnicity, or national origin ostensibly posed a
threat to “mainstream” American society. Booth and McPherson advocated Christian service in ways which, in the end, limited their ability to promote inclusive humanitarianisms and left them susceptible to the charge that their rhetorics, in fact, reinforced social inequalities.

Dorothy Day’s invention of a new mode of humanitarian influence stands as a counterpoint to the models constructed by Booth and McPherson. Unlike Booth and McPherson, Day articulated framed her leadership within the humanitarian sphere as poised to challenge and radically alter both existing benevolence systems and the established social logics and social hierarchies that upheld them. The approach of motherly personalism which she illustrated and promoted promised to provide a new way of caring for the socially least and vulnerable, one based in the principles of human dignity, radical hospitality, and collective Catholic action rather than the modern standards of scientism and statism. Day reasoned that personalism’s ability to uphold human dignity as a sort of “first principle” would lead to the development of modern social reform strategies better equipped to protect the worth of even the most materially worthless individuals. She contrasted her personal, maternal approach to attending to human dignity with the objective standards of scientific efficiency and the necessarily large-scale of state-run benevolence systems, neither of which, in her view, properly met the needs of individuals suffering as a result of the Great Depression. Day prioritized radical hospitality, and the practices of personal care and sacrifice over what she saw as the inherently materialistic and humanity-effacing practices of modern social reform strategies based in scientism and statism. By instructing readers as to how they could follow her lead in extending the resources of the Catholic home to the needy and suffering, she suggested a way to mobilize social change through channels she saw as more effective than those operated by the state. Day’s articulation of motherly personalism thus postulated more than a response to the crisis of the Great Depression;
it also envisioned how collective action in the humanitarian sphere could be inspired through moral influence rather than through conformity to the standards scientific efficiency or the authoritative direction of the U.S. welfare state.

While Booth, McPherson, and Day each separately contributed to the process of inventing new arguments adapting their influence to the 1920s and 30s American humanitarian sphere, Day stood apart as a leader by demonstrating the connection between her humanitarian authority and the full achievement of modern social aims. Booth’s, McPherson’s, and Day’s humanitarian rhetorics each offered unique arguments upholding the merits of their influence in the humanitarian sphere, arguments which offered significant responses to the rise of scientism and statism in modern social reform contexts. Yet Day alone posited an approach which simultaneously advanced a vision for wide-spread social change. Day’s counterexample offers insight into the ongoing importance of religious women’s influence with regard to early-twentieth-century American humanitarianism. Nevertheless, the patterned march of Booth’s and McPherson’s humanitarian rhetorics toward the embrace of robust nationalism raises questions as to how religious women’s participation in the humanitarian sphere also helped perpetuate the sorts of exigencies which worsened the conditions of human suffering in 1920s and 30s, both in the U.S. and abroad.

The final section of this chapter addresses both of these avenues for future research but also into the seemingly indelible connection between feminine religiosity, nationalism, militarism, and the replication of social inequalities in humanitarian contexts.
On Inventing Religious Women’s Humanitarian Authority in the Interwar Period:
Possibilities and Limitations

As Booth’s, McPherson’s, and Day’s leadership models indicate, the rise of scientism
and statism in the humanitarian sphere presented both challenges and opportunities for religious
women who wanted to influence the development of modern social reform. These three leaders
demonstrated efforts to combine aspects of modern social reform with sectarian religious values,
moves which signaled a significant challenge to the implicit nonsectarianism of the American
humanitarian sphere. Their respective responses to the exigencies of human suffering during the
1920s and 30s illustrate some ways in which religiously inspired approaches to social reform
forwarded social progress. The figures examined in this study in fact show a trend important for
how it illustrates religious women’s influence as changing the humanitarian sphere even as it was
changed by the advancement of early-twentieth-century modernity. Day’s model in particular
suggests a mode of leadership which made vital contributions toward the development of new
ways to treat human suffering as well as new ways to counter and critique social inequalities.
So, with newly constructed modes of influence there arose new opportunities when it came to the
role women might play in efforts to reshape social relations, the measure of equality between
peoples, and the definitions of broadly held moral values. Day’s humanitarian rhetoric in
particular indicates the possibility for further research into how sectarian religious leaders
advanced changes to American society in the twentieth century. Her powerful and essentially
radical response to the advance of modern social reform presents a challenge for rhetorical
scholars interested in more fully understanding of the connection between religion and what
Darsey and Ritter term “America’s genetic code.” Further examination of how Day and other
sectarian religious leaders engaged in social change will continue to give rhetorical scholars a
clearer sense of how the “national talk” of social progress in early-twentieth-century America was not always retarded and was sometimes even advanced by aspects of religious rhetorics.

Still, Booth’s and McPherson’s humanitarian rhetorics suggest a very different pattern, one in a significant sense continuous with earlier patterns indicating a convergence between women’s social reform work and the reinforcement of social hierarchies. These women religious leaders indicate a mode of influence which continued to reinforce (rather than transform) the status quo. Even as they contested older values and terminologies associated with religious women’s humanitarianisms, Booth and McPherson implicitly incorporated into their charitable visions stratifications which preferred a resilient white, middle-class culture. Their articulations of nationalism tied the feminine models of Christian service they advocated to militarism through its association with the extension of state power. This dimension of Booth’s and McPherson’s humanitarian rhetorics merits further study. As American humanitarianisms continued to expanded beyond national boarders in the 1920s and 30s, the question remains as to how women leaders like Booth and McPherson participated in the propagation of Americanism in global contexts. This study marks the starting-point for this sort of analysis, but increased attention needs to be given to how sectarian religious leaders articulated American humanitarianisms which attempted to influence not only organized care for the suffering and socially marginalized but also the extension of military and political power beyond the scope of the American geographic nation and into an increasingly robust twentieth century global humanitarian sphere.

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1 Booth, “March On!”
2 Booth, “March On!”
3 McPherson, “God Bless America!,” 3.
APPENDIX A:

CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PRIMARY TEXTS ORGANIZED BY CHAPTER

Chapter 1: Introduction


Chapter 2: Evangeline Booth


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